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Memoirs of Sir Walter Scott

John Gibson Lockhart, Joseph Mallord William Turner

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Engraved by G.B.Shaw from a picture at Abbotsford.

ANNE RUTHERFORD.

Mother of Sir Walter Scott

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LIFE

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

VOL. III.

Country about Abbotsford.

A. & C. BLACK, EDINBURGH.

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Memoirs

OF

Sir Walter Scott

BY

J. G. LOCKHART

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MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER XVI.

Dryden — Critical Pieces — Edition of Slingsby's Memoirs, &c. — Marmion begun — Visit to London — Ellis — Rose — Canning — Miss Seward — Scott Secretary to the Commission on Scotch Jurisprudence — Letters to Southey, &c. — Publication of Marmion — Anecdotes — The Edinburgh Review on Marmion.

1806–1808.

During the whole of 1806 and 1807, Dryden continued to occupy the greater share of Scott's literary hours; but in the course of the former year he found

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time and (notwithstanding all these political bickerings,) inclination to draw up three papers for the Edinburgh Review; viz. one on the poems and translations of the Hon. William Herbert; a second, more valuable and elaborate, in which he compared the "*Specimens* of Early English Romances" by Ellis, with the "*Selection* of Ancient English Metrical Romances" by Ritson; and, lastly, that exquisite piece of humour, his article on the Miseries of Human Life, to which Mr Jeffrey added some, if not all, of the *Reviewers' Groans* with which it concludes. It was in September 1806, too, that Messrs Longman put forth, in a separate volume, those of his own Ballads which, having been included in the Minstrelsy, were already their property, together with a collection of his "Lyrical Pieces;" for which he received £100. This publication, obviously suggested by the continued popularity of the Lay, was highly successful, seven thousand copies having been disposed of before the first collective edition of his poetical works appeared. He had also proposed to include the House of Aspen in the same volume, but on reflection, once more laid his prose tragedy aside. About the same time he issued, though without his name, a miscellaneous volume, entitled, "Original Memoirs written during the Great Civil Wars; being the Life of Sir Henry Slingsby, and Memoirs of Captain Hodgson, with Notes, &c." Scott's pre-

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face consists of a brief but elegant and interesting biography of the gallant cavalier Slingsby; his notes are few and unimportant. This volume (by which he gained nothing as editor) was put forth in October by Messrs Constable; and in November 1806, he began *Marmion*, the publication of which was the first important business of his in which that enterprising firm had a primary part.

He was at this time in frequent communication with several leading booksellers, each of whom would willingly have engrossed his labours; but from the moment that his literary undertakings began to be serious, he seems to have resolved against forming so strict a connexion with any one publisher, as might at all interfere with the freedom of his transactions. I think it not improbable that his interests as the partner of Ballantyne may have had some influence in this part of his conduct; at all events, there can be little doubt that the hope of sharing more and more in the profits of Scott's original works induced the competing booksellers to continue and extend their patronage of the Edinburgh printer, who had been introduced to their notice as the personal friend of the most rising author of the day. But, nevertheless, I can have no doubt that Scott was mainly guided by his love of independence. It was always his maxim, that no author should ever let any one house fancy that they had

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obtained a right of monopoly over his works — or, as he expressed it, in the language of the Scotch feudalists, "that they had completely thirled him to their mill;" and through life, as we shall see, the instant he perceived the least trace of this feeling, he asserted his freedom, not by word, but by some decided deed, on whatever considerations of pecuniary convenience the step might make it necessary for him to trample. Of the conduct of Messrs Longman, who had been principally concerned in the publication of the Minstrelsy, the Lay, Sir Tristrem, and the Ballads, he certainly could have had no reason to complain; on the contrary, he has in various places attested that it was liberal and handsome beyond his expectation; but, nevertheless, a negotiation which they now opened proved fruitless, and ultimately they had no share whatever in the second of his original works.

Constable offered a thousand guineas for the poem very shortly after it was begun, and without having seen one line of it; and Scott, without hesitation, accepted this proposal. It may be gathered from the Introduction of 1830, that private circumstances of a delicate nature rendered it highly desirable for him to obtain the immediate command of such a sum; the price was actually paid long before the poem was published; and it suits very well with Constable's character to suppose that his readiness

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to advance the money may have outstripped the calculations of more established dealers, and thus cast the balance in his favour. He was not, however, so unwise as to keep the whole adventure to himself. His bargain being fairly concluded, he tendered one-fourth of the copyright to Mr Miller of Albemarle Street, and another to Mr Murray, then of Fleet Street, London; and both these booksellers appear to have embraced his proposition with eagerness. "I am," Murray wrote to Constable, on the 6th February 1807, "truly sensible of the kind remembrance of me in your liberal purchase. You have rendered Mr Miller no less happy by your admission of him; and we both view it as honourable, profitable, and glorious to be concerned in the publication of a new poem by Walter Scott." The news that a thousand guineas had been paid for an unseen and unfinished MS. appeared in those days portentous; and it must be allowed that the writer who received such a sum for a performance in embryo, had made a great step in the hazards, as well as in the honours, of authorship.

The private circumstances which he alludes to as having precipitated his re-appearance as a poet were connected with his brother Thomas's final withdrawal from the profession of a Writer to the Signet, which arrangement seems to have become quite necessary towards the end of 1806: but it is

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extremely improbable that, in the absence of any such occurrence, a young, energetic, and ambitious man would have long resisted the cheering stimulus of such success as had attended the Lay of the Last Minstrel.

"I had formed," he says, "the prudent resolution to bestow a little more labour than I had yet done on my productions, and to be in no hurry again to announce myself as a candidate for literary fame. Accordingly, particular passages of a poem which was finally called 'Marmion' were laboured with a good deal of care by one by whom much care was seldom bestowed. Whether the work was worth the labour or not, I am no competent judge; but I may be permitted to say, that the period of its composition was a very happy one in my life; so much so, that I remember with pleasure at this moment (1830) some of the spots in which particular passages were composed. It is probably owing to this that the introductions to the several cantos assumed the form of familiar epistles to my intimate friends, in which I alluded, perhaps more than was necessary or graceful, to my domestic occupations and amusements—a loquacity which may be excused by those who remember that I was still young, light-headed, and happy, and that *out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.*"*

* Introduction to Marmion, 1830.

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The first four of the Introductory Epistles are dated Ashestiel, and they point out very distinctly some of the "spots" which, after the lapse of so many years, he remembered with pleasure for their connexion with particular passages of Marmion. There is a knoll with some tall old ashes on the adjoining farm of the Peel, where he was very fond of sitting by himself, and it still bears the name of the *Sheriff's Knowe*. Another favourite seat was beneath a huge oak hard by the Tweed, at the extremity of the *haugh* of Ashestiel. It was here, that while meditating his verses, he used

> "to stray,
> And waste the solitary day
> In plucking from yon fen the reed,
> And watch it floating down the Tweed;
> Or idly list the shrilling lay
> With which the milkmaid cheers her way,
> Marking its cadence rise and fail,
> As from the field, beneath her pail,
> She trips it down the uneven dale."

He frequently wandered far from home, however, attended only by his dog, and would return late in the evening, having let hours after hours slip away among the soft and melancholy wildernesses where Yarrow creeps from her fountains. The lines,

> "Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,
> By lone Saint Mary's silent like," &c.,

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paint a scene not less impressive than what Byron found amidst the gigantic pines of the forest of Ravenna; and how completely does he set himself before us in the moment of his gentler and more solemn inspiration, by the closing couplet,—

> "Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
> So stilly is the solitude."

But when the theme was of a more stirring order, he enjoyed pursuing it over brake and fell at the full speed of his *Lieutenant*. I well remember his saying, as I rode with him across the hills from Ashestiel to Newark one day in his declining years —"Oh, man, I had many a grand gallop among these braes when I was thinking of Marmion, but a trotting canny pony must serve me now." His friend, Mr Skene, however, informs me that many of the more energetic descriptions, and particularly that of the battle of Flodden, were struck out while he was in quarters again with his cavalry, in the autumn of 1807. "In the intervals of drilling," he says, "Scott used to delight in walking his powerful black steed up and down by himself upon the Portobello sands, within the beating of the surge; and now and then you would see him plunge in his spurs, and go off as if at the charge, with the spray dashing about him. As we rode back to Mussel-

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burgh, he often came and placed himself beside me, to repeat the verses that he had been composing during these pauses of our exercise."

He seems to have communicated fragments of the poem very freely during the whole of its progress. As early as the 22d February 1807, I find Mrs Hayman acknowledging, in the name of the Princess of Wales, the receipt of a copy of the Introduction to Canto III., in which occurs the tribute to Her Royal Highness's heroic father, mortally wounded the year before at Jena — a tribute so grateful to her feelings that she herself shortly after sent the poet an elegant silver vase as a memorial of her thankfulness. And about the same time the Marchioness of Abercorn expresses the delight with which both she and her lord had read the generous verses on Pitt and Fox in another of those epistles. But his connexion with this noble family was no new one; for his father, and afterwards his brother Thomas, had been the auditors of their Scotch rental.

In March his researches concerning Dryden carried him again to the south. During several weeks he gave his day pretty regularly to the pamphlets and MSS. of the British Museum, and the evening to the brilliant societies that now courted him whenever he came within their sphere. His recent political demonstrations during the brief reign of the Whigs, seem to have procured for him on this

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occasion a welcome of redoubled warmth among the leaders of his own now once more victorious party. "As I had," he writes to his brother-in-law, in India, "contrary to many who avowed the same opinions in sunshine, held fast my integrity during the Foxites' interval of power, I found myself of course very well with the new administration." But he uniformly reserved his Saturday and Sunday either for Mr Ellis, at Sunninghill, or Lord and Lady Abercorn, at their beautiful villa near Stanmore; and the press copy of Cantos I. and II. of Marmion attests that most of it reached Ballantyne in sheets, franked by the Marquis, or his son-in-law, Lord Aberdeen, during April 1807.

Before he turned homeward he made a short visit to his friend William Stewart Rose, at his cottage of Gundimore, in Hampshire, and enjoyed in his company various long rides in the New Forest, a day in the dock-yard of Portsmouth, and two or three more in the Isle of Wight.* Several sheets

* I am sure I shall gratify every reader by extracting some lines alluding to Scott's visit at Mr Rose's Marine Villa, from an unpublished poem, entitled "Gundimore," kindly placed at my disposal by his host.

"Here Walter Scott has woo'd the northern muse;
Here he with me has joyed to walk or cruise;
And hence has pricked through Yten's holt, where we
Have called to mind how under greenwood tree,

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of the MS., and corrected proofs of Canto III., are also under covers franked from Gundimore by Mr

---

Pierced by the partner of his 'woodland craft,'
King Rufus fell by Tyrrell's random shaft.
Hence have we ranged by Celtic camps and barrows,
Or climbed the expectant bark, to thread the Narrows
Of Hurst, bound westward to the gloomy bower
Where Charles was prisoned in yon island tower;
Or from a longer flight alighted where
Our navies to recruit their strength repair —
And there have seen the ready shot and gun;
Seen in red steam the molten copper run;
And massive anchor forged, whose iron teeth
Should hold the three-decked ship when billows seethe;
And when the arsenal's dark stithy rang
With the loud hammers of the Cyclop-gang,
Swallowing the darkness up, have seen with wonder,
The flashing fire, and heard fast-following thunder.
Here, witched from summer sea and softer reign,
Foscolo courted Muse of milder strain.
On these ribbed sands was Coleridge pleased to pace,
While ebbing seas have hummed a rolling base
To his rapt talk. Alas! all these are gone,
'And I and other creeping things live on.'
The flask no more, dear Walter, shall I quaff
With thee, no more enjoy thy hearty laugh!
No more shalt thou to me extend thy hand,
A welcome pilgrim to my father's land!

" Alone, such friends and comrades I deplore,
And peopled but with phantoms is the shore:

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Rose; and I think I must quote the note which accompanied one of these detachments, as showing the good-natured buoyancy of mind and temper with which the Poet received in every stage of his progress the hints and suggestions of his watchful friends, Erskine and Ballantyne. The latter having animadverted on the first draught of the song "Where shall the Lover rest," and sketched what he thought would be a better arrangement of the stanza — Scott answers as follows: —

"Dear James,

"I am much obliged to you for the rhymes. I presume it can make no difference as to the air if the first three lines rhyme; and I wish to know, with your leisure, if it is absolutely necessary that the fourth should be out of poetic rhythm, as 'the deserted fair one' certainly is. — For example, would this do?

Hence have I fled my haunted beach; yet so
Would not alike a sylvan home forego.
Though wakening fond regrets, its sere and yellow
Leaves, and sweet inland murmur, serve to mellow
And soothe the sobered sorrow they recall,
When mantled in the faded garb of fall; —
But wind and wave — unlike the sighing sedge
And murmuring leaf — give grief a coarser edge:
And in each howling blast my fancy hears
'The voices of the dead, and songs of other years.'"

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'Should my heart from thee falter,
To another love alter
(For the rhyme we'll say Walter)
Deserting my lover.'

There is here the same number of syllables, but arranged in cadence. I return the proof and send more copy. There will be six Cantos. Yours truly,

W. S."

In the first week of May we find him at Lichfield, having diverged from the great road to Scotland for the purpose of visiting Miss Seward. Her account of her old correspondent, whom till now she had never seen, was addressed to Mr Cary, the translator of Dante; and it may interest the reader to compare it with other similar sketches of earlier and later date. "On Friday last," she says, "the poetically great Walter Scott came 'like a sunbeam to my dwelling.' This proudest boast of the Caledonian muse is tall, and rather robust than slender, but lame in the same manner as Mr Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face nor yet his features are elegant; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eyelashes, with flaxen eyebrows; and a countenance open, ingenuous, and benevolent. When seriously conversing or earnestly attentive, though his eyes are

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rather of a lightish grey, deep thought is on their lids; he contracts his brow, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper lip too long prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome, but the sweetest emanations of temper and heart play about it when he talks cheerfully or smiles — and in company he is much oftener gay than contemplative — his conversation an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness — while on serious themes it is nervous and eloquent; the accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means broad. On the whole, no expectation is disappointed which his poetry must excite in all who feel the power and graces of human inspiration. . . . . Not less astonishing than was Johnson's memory is that of Mr Scott; like Johnson, also, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice either to his own writings or those of others. The stranger guest delighted us all by the unaffected charms of his mind and manners. Such visits are among the most high-prized honours which my writings have procured for me." Miss Seward adds, that she showed him the passage in Cary's Dante where Michael Scott occurs, and that though he admired the spirit and skill of the version, he confessed his inability to find pleasure in the Divina Comedia. "The plan," he said, "appeared to him unhappy; the personal malignity and

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strange mode of revenge presumptuous and uninteresting."

By the 12th of May he was at Edinburgh for the commencement of the summer session, and the printing of Marmion seems thenceforth to have gone on at times with great rapidity, at others slowly and irregularly; the latter Cantos having no doubt been merely blocked out when the first went to press, and his professional avocations, but above all, his Dryden, occasioning frequent interruptions.

Mr Guthrie Wright, a relation and intimate friend of William Erskine, who was among the familiar associates of the Troop, has furnished me with some details which throw light on the construction of Marmion. This gentleman, I may observe, had, through Scott's good offices, succeeded his brother Thomas in the charge of the Abercorn business. — "In the summer of 1807," he says, "I had the pleasure of making a trip with Sir Walter to Dumfries, for the purpose of meeting the late Lord Abercorn on his way with his family to Ireland. His Lordship did not arrive for two or three days after we reached Dumfries, and we employed the interval in visiting Sweetheart Abbey, Caerlaverock Castle, and some other ancient buildings in the neighbourhood. I need hardly say how much I enjoyed the journey. Every one who had the pleasure of his acquaintance knows the inexhaustible store of anecdote and good-

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humour he possessed. He recited poetry and old legends from morn till night, and in short it is impossible that anything could be more delightful than his society; but what I particularly allude to is the circumstance, that at that time he was writing *Marmion*, the three or four first cantos of which he had with him, and which he was so good as read to me. It is unnecessary to say how much I was enchanted with them, but as he good-naturedly asked me to state any observations that occurred to me, I said in joke that it appeared to me he had brought his hero by a very strange *route* into Scotland. 'Why,' says I, 'did ever mortal coming from England to Edinburgh go by Gifford, Crichton Castle, Borthwick Castle, and over the top of Blackford Hill? Not only is it a circuitous *detour*, but there never was a road that way since the world was created!' 'That is a most irrelevant objection,' said Sir Walter; 'it was my good pleasure to bring Marmion by that route, for the purpose of describing the places you have mentioned, and the view from Blackford Hill — it was his business to find his road and pick his steps the best way he could. But, pray, how would you have me bring him? Not by the post-road, surely, as if he had been travelling in a mail-coach?' 'No,' I replied; 'there were neither post-roads nor mail-coaches in those days; but I think you might have brought him with a less chance

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of getting into a swamp, by allowing him to travel the natural route by Dunbar and the sea-coast; and then he might have tarried for a space with the famous Earl of Angus, surnamed Bell-the-Cat,* at his favourite residence of Tantallon Castle, by which means you would have had not only that fortress with all his feudal followers, but the Castle of Dunbar, the Bass, and all the beautiful scenery of the Forth, to describe.' This observation seemed to strike him much, and after a pause he exclaimed, 'By Jove you are right!—I ought to have brought him that way;' and he added, 'but before he and I part, depend upon it he shall visit Tantallon.' He then asked me if I had ever been there, and upon saying I had frequently, he desired me to describe it, which I did; and I verily believe it is from what I then said, that the accurate description contained in the fifth canto was given — at least I never heard him say he had afterwards gone to visit the castle; and when the poem was published, I remember he laughed, and asked me how I liked Tantallon."*

* Mr Guthrie Wright, in his letter to me (Edinburgh, April 5th, 1837), adds—"You have said a good deal about Sir Walter's *military* career, and truly stated how much he was the life and soul of the corps, and that at quarters he used 'to set the table in a roar.' Numberless anecdotes of him might be given about that time. I shall only mention one. Our Adjutant, Jack Adams, was a jolly fat old fellow, a great favourite, who died one day,

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Just a year had elapsed from his beginning the poem, when he penned the Epistle for Canto IV. at Ashestiel; and who, that considers how busily his various pursuits and labours had been crowding the interval, can wonder to be told that

> "Even now, it scarcely seems a day
> Since first I tuned this idle lay —

---

and was buried with military honours. We were all very sorrowful on the occasion — had marched to the Greyfriars churchyard to the Dead March in Saul, and other solemn music, and after having fired over the grave, were coming away — but there seemed to be a moment's pause as to the tune which should be played by the band, when Scott said, 'If I might venture an opinion, it should be, *I hae laid a herrin in saut*,' and we marched off in quick time to that tune accordingly.

"As an instance of the fun and good-humour that prevailed among us, as well as of Sir Walter's ready wit, I may likewise mention an anecdote personal to myself. My rear-rank man rode a great brute of a carriage horse, over which he had not sufficient control, and which therefore not unfrequently, at a charge, broke through the front rank, and he could not pull him up till he had got several yards a-head of the troop. One day as we were standing at ease after this had occurred, I was rather grumbling, I suppose, at one of my legs being carried off in this unceremonious way, to the no small danger of my being unhorsed, when Scott said, 'Why, Sir, I think you are most properly placed in your present position, as you know it is your especial business *to check overcharges*,' alluding to my official duty, as Auditor of the Court of Session, to check overcharges in bills of costs." [1839.]

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A task so often laid aside
When leisure graver cares denied —
That now November's dreary gale,
Whose voice inspired my opening tale,
That same November gale once more
Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore."

The fifth Introduction was written in Edinburgh in the month following; that to the last Canto, during the Christmas festivities of Mertoun-house, where, from the first days of his ballad-rhyming, down to the close of his life, he, like his bearded ancestor, usually spent that season with the immediate head of the race. The bulky appendix of notes, including a mass of curious antiquarian quotations, must have moved somewhat slowly through the printer's hands; but Marmion was at length ready for publication by the middle of February 1808.

Among the "graver cares" which he alludes to as having interrupted his progress in the poem, the chief were, as has been already hinted, those arising from the altered circumstances of his brother. These are mentioned in a letter to Miss Seward, dated in August 1807. The lady had, among other things, announced her pleasure in the prospect of a visit from the author of "Madoc," expressed her admiration of "Master Betty, the Young Roscius," and lamented the father's design of placing that "miraculous boy" for three years under a certain

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"schoolmaster of eminence at Shrewsbury."* Scott says in answer—

"Since I was favoured with your letter, my dear Miss Seward, I have brought the unpleasant transactions to which my last letter alluded, pretty near to a conclusion, much more fortunate than I had ventured to hope. Of my brother's creditors, those connected with him by blood or friendship showed all the kindness which those ties are in Scotland peculiarly calculated to produce; and, what is here much more uncommon, those who had no personal connexion with him, or his family, showed a liberality which would not have misbecome the generosity of the English. Upon the whole, his affairs are put in a course of management which I hope will enable him to begin life anew with renovated hopes, and not entirely destitute of the means of recommencing business.

"I am very happy—although a little jealous withal—that you are to have the satisfaction of Southey's personal acquaintance. I am certain you will like the Epic bard exceedingly. Although he does not deign to enter into the mere trifling intercourse of society, yet when a sympathetic spirit calls him forth, no man talks with more animation on

* See Miss Seward's Letters, vol. vi. p. 364.

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literary topics; and perhaps no man in England has read and studied so much, with the same powers of making use of the information which he is so indefatigable in acquiring. I despair of reconciling you to my little friend Jeffrey, although I think I could trust to his making some impression on your prepossession, were you to converse with him. I think Southey does himself injustice in supposing the Edinburgh Review, or any other, could have sunk Madoc, even for a time. But the size and price of the work, joined to the frivolity of an age which must be treated as nurses humour children, are sufficient reasons why a poem, on so chaste a model, should not have taken immediately. We know the similar fate of Milton's immortal work, in the witty age of Charles II., at a time when poetry was much more fashionable than at present. As to the division of the profits, I only think that Southey does not understand the gentlemen of *the trade*, emphatically so called, as well as I do. Without any greater degree of *fourberie* than they conceive the long practice of their brethren has rendered matter of prescriptive right, they contrive to clip the author's proportion of profits down to a mere trifle. It is the tale of the fox that went a-hunting with the lion, upon condition of equal division of the spoil; and yet I do not quite blame the booksellers, when I consider the very singular nature of their *mystery*.

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A butcher generally understands something of black cattle, and wo betide the jockey who should presume to exercise his profession without a competent knowledge of horse-flesh. But who ever heard of a bookseller pretending to understand the commodity in which he dealt? They are the only tradesmen in the world who professedly, and by choice, deal in what is called 'a pig in a poke.' When you consider the abominable trash which, by their sheer ignorance, is published every year, you will readily excuse them for the indemnification which they must necessarily obtain at the expense of authors of some value. In fact, though the account between an individual bookseller and such a man as Southey may be iniquitous enough, yet I apprehend, that upon the whole the account between *the trade* and the authors of Britain at large is pretty fairly balanced; and what these gentlemen gain at the expense of one class of writers, is lavished, in many cases, in bringing forward other works of little value. I do not know but this, upon the whole, is favourable to the cause of literature. A bookseller publishes twenty books, in hopes of hitting upon one good speculation, as a person buys a parcel of shares in a lottery, in hopes of gaining a prize. Thus the road is open to all, and if the successful candidate is a little fleeced, in order to form petty prizes to console the losing adventurers, still the cause of literature is benefited, since none is

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excluded from the privilege of competition. This does not apologize for Southey's carelessness about his interest—for,

——'his name *is* up, and may go
From Toledo to Madrid.'

"Pray, don't trust Southey too long with Mr White. He is even more determined in his admiration of old *ruins* than I am. You see I am glad to pick a hole in his jacket, being more jealous of his personal favour in Miss Seward's eyes than of his poetical reputation.

"I quite agree with you about the plan of young Betty's education, and am no great idolater of the learned languages, excepting for what they contain. We spend in youth that time in admiring the wards of the key, which we should employ in opening the cabinet and examining its treasures. A prudent and accomplished friend, who would make instruction acceptable to him for the sake of the amusement it conveys, would be worth an hundred schools. How can so wonderfully premature a genius, accustomed to excite interest in thousands, be made a member of a class with other boys!"

To return to Scott's own "graver cares" while Marmion was in progress. Among them were those of preparing himself for an office to which he was

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formally appointed soon afterwards, namely, that of Secretary to a Parliamentary Commission for the improvement of Scottish Jurisprudence. This Commission, at the head of which was Sir Islay Campbell, Lord President of the Court of Session, continued in operation for two or three years. Scott's salary, as secretary, was a mere trifle; but he had been led to expect that his exertions in this capacity would lead to better things. In giving a general view of his affairs to his brother-in-law in India, he says— "The Clerk of Session who retired to make way for me, retains the appointments, while I do the duty. This was rather a hard bargain, but it was made when the Administration was going to pieces, and I was glad to swim ashore on a plank of the wreck; or, in a word, to be provided for anyhow, before the new people came in. To be sure, nobody could have foreseen that in a year's time my friends were all to be in again. . . . . I am principally pleased with my new appointment as being conferred on me by our chief law lords and King's counsel, and consequently an honourable professional distinction. The employment will be but temporary, but may have consequences important to my future lot in life, if I give due satisfaction in the discharge of it." He appears accordingly to have submitted to a great deal of miserable drudgery, in mastering beforehand the details of the technical controversies which had

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called for legislatorial interference; and he discharged his functions, as usual, with the warm approbation of his superiors: but no result followed. This is alluded to, among other things, in his correspondence with Mr Southey, during the printing of Marmion. I shall now go back to extract some of these letters; they will not only enable the reader to fill up the outline of the preceding narrative, as regards Scott's own various occupations at this period, but illustrate very strikingly the readiness with which, however occupied, he would turn aside, whenever he saw any opportunity of forwarding the pursuits and interests of other literary men.

Mr Southey had written to Scott, on the 27th September 1807, informing him that he had desired his booksellers to forward a copy of Palmerin of England, then on the eve of publication; announcing also his Chronicle of the Cid; and adding, "I rejoice to hear that we are to have another Lay, and hope we may have as many Last Lays of the Minstrel, as our ancestors had Last Words of Mr Baxter" Scott's answer was this: —

"*To Robert Southey, Esq.*

"Ashestiel, 1st October 1807.

"My Dear Southey,

"It will give me the most sincere pleasure to

receive any token of your friendly remembrance, more especially in the shape of a romance of knight-errantry. You know so well how to furbish the arms of a preux chevalier, without converting him *à la Tressan* into a modern light dragoon, that my expectations from Palmerin are very high, and I have given directions to have him sent to this retreat so soon as he reaches Edinburgh. The half-guinea for Hogg's poems was duly received. The uncertainty of your residence prevented the book being sent at the time proposed—it shall be forwarded from Edinburgh to the bookseller at Carlisle, who will probably know how to send it safe. I hope very soon to send you my Life of Dryden, and eke my *last* Lay—(by the way, the former ditty was only proposed as the lay of the *last* Minstrel, not his *last* fitt.) I grieve that you have renounced the harp; but still I confide, that, having often touched it so much to the delight of the hearers, you will return to it again after a short interval. As I don't much admire compliments, you may believe me sincere when I tell you, that I have read Madoc three times since my first cursory perusal, and each time with increased admiration of the poetry. But a poem whose merits are of that higher tone does not immediately take with the public at large. It is even possible that during your own life—and may it be as long as every real lover of literature can wish—you must be

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contented with the applause of the few whom nature has gifted with the rare taste for discriminating in poetry. But the mere *readers of verse* must one day come in, and then Madoc will assume his real place at the feet of Milton. Now this opinion of mine was not that (to speak frankly) which I formed on reading the poem at first, though I then felt much of its merit. I hope you have not, and don't mean to part with the copyright. I do not think Wordsworth and you understand the bookselling animal well enough, and wish you would one day try my friend Constable, who would give any terms for a connexion with you. I am most anxious to see the Cid. Do you know I committed a theft upon you (neither of gait, kine, nor horse, nor outside nor inside plenishing, such as my forefathers sought in Cumberland), but of many verses of the Queen Auragua,* or howsoever you spell her name? I repeated them to a very great lady (the Princess of Wales), who was so much delighted with them, that I think she got them by heart also. She asked a copy, but that I declined to give, under pretence I could not give an accurate one; but I promised to prefer her request to you. If you wish to oblige her R. H., I will get the verses transmitted to her; if not, the thing may be passed over.

* The ballad of Queen Orraca was first published in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1808.

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"Many thanks for your invitation to Keswick, which I hope to accept, time and season permitting. Is your brother with you? if so, remember me kindly.* Where is Wordsworth, and what doth he do? I wrote him a few lines some weeks ago, which I suspect never came to hand. I suppose you are possessed of all relating to the Cid, otherwise I would mention an old romance, chiefly relating to his banishment, which is in John Frere's possession, and from which he made some lively translations in a tripping Alexandrine stanza. I dare say he would communicate the original, if it could be of the least use.† I am an humble petitioner that your interesting Spanish ballads be in some shape appended to the Cid. Be assured they will give him wings. There is a long letter written with a pen like a stick. I beg my respects to Mrs Southey, in which Mrs Scott joins; and I am, very truly and affectionately, yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

"*To the Same.*

"Edinburgh, November 1807.

"My Dear Southey,

"I received your letter some time ago, but had

* Dr Henry Southey had studied at the University of Edinburgh.

† Mr Southey introduced, in the appendix to his Chronicle of the Cid, some specimens of Mr Frere's admirable translation of the ancient *Poema del Cid*, to which Scott here alludes.

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then no opportunity to see Constable, as I was residing at some distance from Edinburgh. Since I came to town I spoke to Constable, whom I find anxious to be connected with you. It occurs to me that the only difference between him and our fathers in the Row is on the principle contained in the old proverb:—*He that would thrive—must rise by five; —He that has thriven—may lye till seven.* Constable *would* thrive, and therefore bestows more pains than our fathers who *have* thriven. I do not speak this without book, because I know he has pushed off several books which had got aground in the Row. But, to say the truth, I have always found advantage in keeping on good terms with several of the trade, but never suffering any one of them to consider me as a monopoly. They are very like farmers, who thrive best at a high rent; and, in general, take most pains to sell a book that has cost them money to purchase. The bad sale of Thalaba is truly astonishing; it should have sold off in a twelvemonth at farthest.

"As you occasionally review, will you forgive my suggesting a circumstance for your consideration, to which you will give exactly the degree of weight you please. I am perfectly certain that Jeffrey would think himself both happy and honoured in receiving any communications which you might send him, choosing your books and expressing your own opi-

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nions. The terms of the Edinburgh Review are ten guineas a-sheet, and will shortly be advanced considerably. I question if the same unpleasant sort of work is any where else so well compensated. The only reason which occurs to me as likely to prevent your affording the Edinburgh some critical assistance, is the severity of the criticisms upon Madoc and Thalaba. I do not know if this will be at all removed by assuring you, as I can do upon my honour, that Jeffrey has, notwithstanding the flippancy of these articles, the most sincere respect both for your person and talents. The other day I designedly led the conversation on that subject, and had the same reason I always have had to consider his attack as arising from a radical difference in point of taste, or rather feeling of poetry, but by no means from any thing approaching either to enmity or a false conception of your talents. I do not think that a difference of this sort should prevent you, if you are otherwise disposed to do so, from carrying a proportion at least of your critical labours to a much better market than the Annual.* Pray think of this, and if you are disposed to give your assistance, I am positively certain that I can transact the matter with the utmost delicacy towards both my friends. I am cer-

* The Annual Review, conducted by Dr Arthur Aikin, commenced in 1802 and was discontinued in 1808.

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tain you may add £100 a-year, or double the sum, to your income in this way with almost no trouble, and, as times go, that is no trifle.

"I have to thank you for Palmerin, which has been my afternoon reading for some days. I like it very much, although it is, I think, considerably inferior to the Amadis. But I wait with double anxiety for the Cid, in which I expect to find very much information as well as amusement. One discovery I have made is, that we understand little or nothing of Don Quixote except by the Spanish romances. The English and French romances throw very little light on the subject of the doughty cavalier of La Mancha. I am thinking of publishing a small edition of the Morte Arthur, merely to preserve that ancient record of English chivalry; but my copy is so late as 1637, so I must look out for earlier editions to collate. That of Caxton is, I believe, *introuvable*. Will you give me your opinion on this project? I have written to Mr Frere about the Spanish books, but I do not very well know if my letter has reached him. I expect to bring Constable to a point respecting the poem of Hindoo Mythology.* I should esteem myself very fortunate in being assisting in bringing forth a twin brother of

* The Curse of Kehama was published by Longman and Co. in 1310.

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Thalaba. Wordsworth is harshly treated in the Edinburgh Review, but Jeffrey gives the sonnets as much praise as he usually does to any body. I made him admire the song of Lord Clifford's minstrel, which I like exceedingly myself. But many of Wordsworth's lesser poems are *caviare*, not only to the multitude, but to all who judge of poetry by the established rules of criticism. Some of them, I can safely say, I like the better for these aberrations; in others they get beyond me — at any rate, they ought to have been more cautiously hazarded. I hope soon to send you a Life of Dryden and a Lay of former times. The latter I would willingly have bestowed more time upon; but what can I do? — my supposed poetical turn ruined me in my profession, and the least it can do is to give me some occasional assistance instead of it. Mrs Scott begs kind compliments to Mrs Southey, and I am always kindly yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

Mr Southey, in reply to this letter, stated at length certain considerations, political, moral, and critical, which rendered it impossible for him to enlist himself on any terms in the corps of the Edinburgh Reviewers. In speaking of his friend Wordsworth's last work, which had been rather severely handled in this Review, he expresses his regret that the

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poet, in his magnificent sonnet on Killiecrankie, should have introduced the Viscount of Dundee without apparent censure of his character; and, passing to Scott's own affairs, he says—"Marmion is expected as impatiently by me as he is by ten thousand others. Believe me, Scott, no man of real genius was ever a puritanical stickler for correctness, or fastidious about any faults except his own. The best artists, both in poetry and painting, have produced the most. Give us more lays, and correct them at leisure for after editions,—not laboriously, but when the amendment comes naturally and unsought for. It never does to sit down doggedly to correct." The rest, Scott's answer will sufficiently explain:—

"*To Robert Southey, Esq.*

"Edinburgh, 15th December 1807.

"Dear Southey,

"I yesterday received your letter, and can perfectly enter into your ideas on the subject of the Review:—indeed, I dislike most extremely the late strain of politics which they have adopted, as it seems, even on their own showing, to be cruelly imprudent. Who ever thought he did a service to a person engaged in an arduous conflict, by proving

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to him, or attempting to prove to him, that he must necessarily be beaten? and what effect can such language have but to accelerate the accomplishment of the prophecy which it contains? And as for Catholic Emancipation — I am not, God knows, a bigot in religious matters, nor a friend to persecution; but if a particular sect of religionists are *ipso facto* connected with foreign politics — and placed under the spiritual direction of a class of priests, whose unrivalled dexterity and activity are increased by the rules which detach them from the rest of the world — I humbly think that we may be excused from intrusting to them those places in the State where the influence of such a clergy, who act under the direction of a passive tool of our worst foe, is likely to be attended with the most fatal consequences. If a gentleman chooses to walk about with a couple of pounds of gunpowder in his pocket, if I give him the shelter of my roof, I may at least be permitted to exclude him from the seat next to the fire. So thinking, I have felt your scruples in doing any thing for the Review of late.

"As for my good friend Dundee, I cannot admit his culpability in the extent you allege; and it is scandalous of the Sunday bard to join in your condemnation, 'and yet come of a noble Græme!' I admit he was *tant soit peu sauvage*, but he was a noble savage; and the beastly Covenanters against

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whom he acted, hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind feet. You can hardly conceive the perfidy, cruelty, and stupidity of these people according to the accounts they have themselves preserved. But I admit I had many cavalier prejudices instilled into me, as my ancestor was a Killiecrankie man.

"I am very glad the Morte Arthur is in your hands; it has been long a favourite of mine, and I intended to have made it a handsome book, in the shape of a small antique-looking quarto, with wooden vignettes of costume. I wish you would not degrade him into a squat 12mo; but admit the temptation you will probably feel to put it into the same shape with Palmerin and Amadis. If on this, or any occasion, you can cast a job in the way of my friend Ballantyne, I should consider it as a particular personal favour, and the convenience would be pretty near the same to you, as all your proofs must come by post at any rate. If I can assist you about this matter, command my services. The late Duke of Roxburghe once showed me some curious remarks of his own upon the genealogy of the Knights of the Round Table. He was a curious and unwearied reader of romance, and made many observations in writing; whether they are now accessible or no, I am doubtful. Do you follow the metrical or the printed books in your account of the Round Table,

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and would your task be at all facilitated by the use of a copy of Sir Lancelot, from the press of Jehan Dennis, which I have by me?

"As to literary envy, I agree with you, dear Southey, in believing it was never felt by men who had any powers of their own to employ to better purpose than in crossing or jostling their companions; and I can say with a safe conscience, that I am most delighted with praise from those who convince me of their good taste by admiring the genius of my contemporaries. Believe me ever, Dear Southey, with best compliments to Mrs S., yours affectionately,

WALTER SCOTT."

The following letter to another accomplished and attached friend, will bring us back to the completion of Marmion:—

"*To the Right Hon. the Lady Louisa Stuart, London.*

"Edinburgh, 19th January 1808.

"I am much flattered, Dear Lady Louisa, by your kind and encouraging remembrance. Marmion is, at this instant, gasping upon Flodden field, and there I have been obliged to leave him for these few days in the death pangs. I hope I shall find time

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enough this morning to knock him on the head with two or three thumping stanzas. I thought I should have seen Lady Douglas while she was at Dalkeith, but all the Clerks of Session (excepting myself, who have at present no salary) are subject to the gout, and one of them was unluckily visited with a fit on the day I should have been at the Duke's, so I had his duty and my own to discharge. Pray, Lady Louisa, don't look for Marmion in Hawthornden or any where else, excepting in the too thick quarto which bears his name. As to the fair * * * * * * *, I beg her pardon with all my heart and spirit; but I rather think that the habit of writing novels or romances, whether in prose or verse, is unfavourable to rapid credulity; at least these sort of folks know that they can easily make fine stories themselves, and will be therefore as curious in examining those of other folks as a cunning vintner in detecting the sophistication of his neighbour's claret by the help of his own experience. Talking of fair ladies and fables reminds me of Mr Sharpe's ballads,* which I suppose Lady Douglas carried with her to Bothwell. They exhibit, I think, a very considerable portion of imagination, and occasionally, though not uniformly, great flow of versification. There is one verse, or

* A small volume, entitled "Metrical Legends and other Poems," was published in 1807 by Scott's friend Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq.

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rather the whole description of a musical ghost lady sitting among the ruins of her father's tower, that pleased me very much. But his language is too flowery and even tawdry, and I quarrelled with a lady in the first poem who yielded up her affection upon her lover showing his white teeth. White teeth ought to be taken great care of and set great store by; but I cannot allow them to be an object of passionate admiration—it is too like subduing a lady's heart by grinning. Grieved am I for Lady Douglas's indisposition, which I hope will be short, and I am sure will be tolerable with such stores of amusement around her. Last night I saw all the Dalkeith family presiding in that happy scene of mixed company and Babylonian confusion, the Queen's Assembly. I also saw Mr Alison there. I hope your ladyship has not renounced your intention of coming to Edinburgh for a day or two, and that I shall have the honour to see you. We have here a very diverting lion and sundry wild beasts; but the most meritorious is Miss Lydia White, who is what Oxonians call a lioness of the first order, with stockings nineteen times nine dyed blue, very lively, very good-humoured, and extremely absurd. It is very diverting to see the sober Scotch ladies staring at this phenomenon. I am, with great respect, your ladyship's honoured and obliged

WALTER SCOTT."

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Marmion was published on the 23d of February. The letter which accompanied the presentation copy to Sunninghill, had been preceded a few weeks before by one containing an abstract of some of Weber's German researches, which were turned to account in the third edition of Sir Tristrem; but Mr Ellis was at this time in a very feeble state of health, and that communication had elicited no reply.

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Edinburgh, February 23, 1808.

'Sleepest thou, wakest thou, George Ellis?'

"Be it known that this letter is little better than a *fehde brief*,—as to the meaning of which is it not written in Wachter's Thesaurus and the Lexicon of Adelung? To expound more vernacularly, I wrote you, I know not how long ago, a swinging epistle of and concerning German Romances, with some discoveries not of my own discovering, and other matter not furiously to the present purpose. And this I caused to be conveyed to you by *ane gentil knizt, Sir William Forbes, knizt*, who assures me he left it as directed, at Sir Peter Parker's. 'Since,' to vary my style to that of the ledger, 'none of yours.' To avenge myself of this unusual silence, which is a manifest usurpation of my privi-

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leges (being the worst correspondent in the world, Heber excepted), I have indited to you an epistle in verse, and that I may be sure of its reaching your hands, I have caused to be thrown off 2000 copies thereof, that you may not plead ignorance.

" This is oracular, but will be explained by perusing the Introduction to the 5th canto of a certain dumpy quarto, entitled Marmion, a Tale of Flodden-field, of which I have to beg your acceptance of a copy. ' So wonder on till time makes all things plain.' One thing I am sure you will admit, and that is, that—' the hobby-horse is *not* forgot;'* nay, you will see I have paraded in my Introductions a plurality of hobby-horses—a whole stud, on each of which I have, in my day, been accustomed to take an airing. This circumstance will also gratify our friend Douce, whose lucubrations have been my study for some days.† They will, I fear, be *caviare* to the multitude, and even to the *soi-disant* connoisseurs, who have never found by experience what length of time, of reading, and of reflection, is necessary to collect the archæological knowledge of which he has displayed such profusion. The style would also, in our Scotch phrase, *thole amends*, i. e. admit

* " For, O, For, O, the hobby-horse is forgot." — *Hamlet.*

† Mr Douce's Illustrations of Shakspeare were published late in 1807.

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of improvement. But his extensive and curious researches place him at the head of the class of black-letter antiquaries; and his knowledge is communicated without the manifest irritation, which his contemporaries have too often displayed in matters of controversy, — without ostentation, and without self-sufficiency. I hope the success of his work will encourage this modest and learned antiquary to give us more collectanea. There are few things I read with more pleasure. Charlotte joins in kindest respects to Mrs Ellis. I have some hopes of being in town this spring, but I fear you will be at Bath. When you have run over Marmion, I hope you will remember how impatient I shall be to hear your opinion *sans phrase*. I am sensible I run some risk of being thought to fall below my former level, but those that will play for the gammon must take their chance of this. I am also anxious to have particular news of your health. Ever yours faithfully,

W. S."

The letter reached Ellis before the book; but how well he anticipated the immediate current of criticism, his answer will show. "Before I have seen the stranger," he says, "and while my judgment is unwarped by her seduction, I think I can venture, from what I remember of the Lay, to anticipate the fluctuations of public opinion concerning her. The

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first decision respecting the Last Minstrel was, that he was evidently the production of a strong and vivid mind, and not quite unworthy the author of Glenfinlas and the Eve of St John; but that it was difficult to eke out so long a poem with uniform spirit; that success generally emboldens writers to become more careless in a second production; that—— in short, months elapsed, before one-tenth of our wise critics had discovered that a long poem which no one reader could bring himself to lay down till he had arrived at the last line, was a composition destined perhaps to suggest new rules of criticism, but certainly not amenable to the tribunal of a taste formed on the previous examination of models of a perfectly different nature. That Minstrel is now in its turn become a standard; Marmion will therefore be compared with this *metre*, and will most probably be in the first instance pronounced too long, or too short, or improperly divided, or &c. &c. &c., till the sage and candid critics are compelled, a second time, by the united voice of all who can read at all, to confess that '*aut prodesse aut delectare*' is the only real standard of poetical merit. One of my reasons for liking your Minstrel was, that the subject was purely and necessarily *poetical;* whereas my sincere and sober opinion of all the *epic poems* I have ever read, the Odyssey perhaps excepted, is that they ought to have been written in prose; and hence, though I

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think with Mackintosh, that '*forte epos acer ut nemo Varius scribit,*' I rejoice in your choice of a subject which cannot be considered as epic, or conjure up in the memory a number of fantastic rules, which, like Harpies, would spoil the banquet offered to the imagination. A few days, however, will, I hope, enable me to write *avec connaissance de cause.*"

I have, I believe, alluded, in a former Chapter of this narrative, to a remark which occurs in Mr Southey's Life of Cowper, namely, that a man's character may be judged of even more surely by the letters which his friends addressed to him, than by those which he himself penned; and I cannot but think that — freely as Scott's own feelings and opinions were poured from his head and heart to all whom he considered as worthy of a wise and good man's confidence — the openness and candour with which the best and most sagacious of his friends wrote to him about his own literary productions, will be considered hereafter (when all the glories of this age shall, like him, have passed away), as affording a striking confirmation of the truth of the biographer's observation. It was thus, for example, that Mr Southey himself, who happened to be in London when Marmion came out, expressed himself to the author, on his return to Keswick — "Half the poem I had read at Heber's before my

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own copy arrived. I went punctually to breakfast with him, and he was long enough dressing to let me devour so much of it. The story is made of better materials than the Lay, yet they are not so well fitted together. As a whole, it has not pleased me so much—in parts, it has pleased me more. There is nothing so finely conceived in your former poem as the death of Marmion: there is nothing finer in its conception any where. The introductory epistles I did not wish away, because, as poems, they gave me great pleasure; but I wished them at the end of the volume, or at the beginning — any where except where they were. My taste is perhaps peculiar in disliking all interruptions in narrative poetry. When the poet lets his story sleep, and talks in his own person, it has to me the same sort of unpleasant effect that is produced at the end of an act. You are alive to know what follows, and lo — down comes the curtain, and the fiddlers begin with their abominations. The general opinion, however, is with me, in this particular instance. . . . ." I have no right to quote the rest of Mr Southey's letter, which is filled chiefly with business of his own; but towards its close, immediately after mentioning a princely instance of generosity on the part of his friend Mr Walter Savage Landor to a brother poet, he has a noble sentence, which I hope to be pardoned for extracting, as equally applicable to his

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own character and that of the man he was addressing. — "Great poets," says the author of Thalaba, "have no envy; little ones are full of it! I doubt whether any man ever criticised a good poem maliciously, who had not written a bad one himself." I must not omit to mention, that on his way from London down to Keswick, Mr Southey had visited at Stamford the late industrious antiquary Octavius Gilchrist, who was also at this time one of Scott's frequent correspondents. Mr Gilchrist writes (May 21) to Scott—"Southey pointed out to me a passage in Marmion, which he thought finer than any thing he remembered."

Mr Wordsworth knew Scott too well not to use the same masculine freedom. "Thank you," he says, "for Marmion. I think your end has been attained. That it is not the end which I should wish you to propose to yourself, you will be well aware, from what you know of my notions of composition, both as to matter and manner. In the circle of my acquaintance, it seems as well liked as the Lay, though I have heard that in the world it is not so. Had the poem been much better than the Lay, it could scarcely have satisfied the public, which has too much of the monster, the moral monster, in its composition. The spring has burst out upon us all at once, and the vale is now in exquisite beauty; a gentle shower has fallen this

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morning, and I hear the thrush, who has built in my orchard, singing amain. How happy we should be to see you here again! Ever, my Dear Scott, your sincere friend, W. W."

I pass over a multitude of the congratulatory effusions of inferior names, but must not withhold part of a letter on a folio sheet, written not in the first hurry of excitement, but on the 2d of May, two months after Marmion had reached Sunninghill.

"I have," says Ellis, "been endeavouring to divest myself of those prejudices to which the impression on my own palate would naturally give rise, and to discover the sentiments of those who have only tasted the general compound, after seeing the sweetmeats picked out by my comrades and myself. I have severely questioned all my friends whose critical discernment I could fairly trust, and mean to give you the honest result of their collective opinions; for which reason, inasmuch as I shall have a good deal to say, besides which, there seems to be a natural connexion between foolscap and criticism, I have ventured on this expanse of paper. In the first place, then, all the world are agreed that you are like the elephant mentioned in the Spectator, who was the greatest elephant in the

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world except himself, and consequently, that the only question at issue is, whether the Lay or Marmion shall be reputed the most pleasing poem in our language — save and except one or two of Dryden's fables. But, with respect to the two rivals, I think the Lay is, on the whole, the greatest favourite. It is admitted that the fable of Marmion is greatly superior — that it contains a greater diversity of character — that it inspires more interest — and that it is by no means inferior in point of poetical expression; but it is contended that the incident of Deloraine's journey to Melrose surpasses any thing in Marmion, and that the personal appearance of the Minstrel, who, though the last, is by far the most charming of all minstrels, is by no means compensated by the idea of an author shorn of his picturesque beard, deprived of his harp, and writing letters to his intimate friends. These introductory epistles, indeed, though excellent in themselves, are in fact only interruptions to the fable; and accordingly, nine out of ten have perused them separately, either after or before the poem — and it is obvious that they cannot have produced, in either case, the effect which was proposed — viz. of relieving the reader's attention, and giving variety to the whole. Perhaps, continue these critics, it would be fair to say that Marmion delights us in spite of its introductory epistles — while the Lay owes its principal

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charm to the venerable old minstrel: — the two poems may be considered as equally respectable to the talents of the author; but the first, being a more perfect whole, will be more constantly preferred. Now, all this may be very true — but it is no less true that every body has already read Marmion *more than once* — that it is the subject of general conversation — that it delights all ages and all tastes, and that it is universally allowed to improve upon a second reading. My own opinion is, that both the productions are equally good in their different ways: yet, upon the whole, I had rather be the author of Marmion than of the Lay, because I think its species of excellence of much more difficult attainment. What degree of bulk may be essentially necessary to the corporeal part of an Epic poem, I know not; but sure I am that the story of Marmion might have furnished twelve books as easily as six — that the masterly character of Constance would not have been less bewitching had it been much more minutely painted — and that De Wilton might have been dilated with great ease, and even to considerable advantage; — in short, that had it been your intention merely to exhibit a spirited romantic story, instead of making that story subservient to the delineation of the manners which prevailed at a certain period of our history, the number and variety of your characters would have suited any scale of painting

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Marmion is to Deloraine what Tom Jones is to Joseph Andrews — the varnish of high breeding nowhere diminishes the prominence of the features — and the minion of a king is as light and sinewy a cavalier as the Borderer, — rather less ferocious, more wicked, less fit for the hero of a ballad, and far more for the hero of a regular poem. On the whole, I can sincerely assure you, '*sans phrase*,' that had I seen Marmion without knowing the author, I should have ranked it with Theodore and Honoria, — that is to say, on the very top shelf of English poetry. Now for faults." . . . . . .

Mr Ellis proceeds to notice some minor blemishes, which he hoped to see erased in a future copy; but as most, if not all, of these were sufficiently dwelt on by the professional critics, whose strictures are affixed to the poem in the last collective edition, and as, moreover, Scott did not avail himself of any of the hints thus publicly, as well as privately tendered for his guidance, I shall not swell my page by transcribing more of this elegant letter. The part I have given may no doubt be considered as an epitome of the very highest and most refined of London table-talk on the subject of Marmion, during the first freshness of its popularity, and before the Edinburgh Review, the only critical journal of which any one

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in those days thought very seriously, had pronounced its verdict.

When we consider some parts of that judgment, together with the author's personal intimacy with the editor, and the aid which he had of late been affording to the Journal itself, it must be allowed that Mr Jeffrey acquitted himself on this occasion in a manner highly creditable to his courageous sense of duty. The Number containing the article on Marmion, was accompanied by this note: —

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Castle Street.*

"Queen Street, Tuesday.

"Dear Scott,

"If I did not give you credit for more magnanimity than other of your irritable tribe, I should scarcely venture to put this into your hands. As it is, I do it with no little solicitude, and earnestly hope that it will make no difference in the friendship which has hitherto subsisted between us. I have spoken of your poem exactly as I think, and though I cannot reasonably suppose that you will be pleased with every thing I have said, it would mortify me very severely to believe I had given you pain. If you have any amity left for me, you will not delay very

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long to tell me so. In the meantime, I am very sincerely yours,

F. JEFFREY."

The reader who has the Edinburgh Review for April 1808, will I hope pause here and read the article as it stands; endeavouring to put himself into the situation of Scott when it was laid upon his desk, together with this ominous billet from the critic, who, as it happened. had been for some time engaged to dine that same Tuesday at his table in Castle Street. I have not room to transcribe the whole; but no unfair notion of its spirit and tenor may be gathered from one or two of the principal paragraphs. After an ingenious little dissertation on epic poetry in general, the reviewer says —

"We are inclined to suspect that the success of the work now before us will be less brilliant than that of the author's former publication, though we are ourselves of opinion that its intrinsic merits are nearly, if not altogether equal, and that, if it had had the fate to be the elder born, it would have inherited as fair a portion of renown as has fallen to the lot of its predecessor. It is a good deal longer, indeed, and somewhat more ambitious; and it is rather clearer, that it has greater faults than that it has greater beauties — though, for our own parts, we are inclined to believe in both propositions. It has more flat and tedious passages, and more ostentation of historical and antiquarian lore: but it has also greater richness and variety, both of character and incident; and if it has less sweetness and pathos in the softer passages, it

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has certainly more vehemence and force of colouring in the loftier and busier representations of action and emotion. The place of the prologuising minstrel is but ill supplied, indeed, by the epistolary dissertations which are prefixed to each book of the present poem; and the ballad-pieces and mere episodes which it contains have less finish and poetical beauty; but there is more airiness and spirit in the higher delineations; and the story, if not more skilfully conducted, is at least better complicated, and extended through a wider field of adventure. The characteristics of both, however, are evidently the same; a broken narrative — a redundency of minute description — bursts of unequal and energetic poetry — and a general tone of spirit and animation, unchecked by timidity or affectation, and unchastened by any great delicacy of taste or elegance of fancy."

* * * * * * *

"But though we think this last romance of Mr Scott's about as good as the former, and allow that it affords great indications of poetical talent, we must remind our readers that we never entertained much partiality for this sort of composition, and ventured on a former occasion to express our regret that an author endowed with such talents should consume them in imitations of obsolete extravagance, and in the representation of manners and sentiments in which none of his readers can be supposed to take much interest, except the few who can judge of their exactness. To write a modern romance of chivalry, seems to be much such a phantasy as to build a modern abbey or an English pagoda. For once, however, it may be excused as a pretty caprice of genius; but a second production of the same sort is entitled to less indulgence, and imposes a sort of duty to drive the author from so idle a task, by a fair exposition of the faults which are, in a manner, inseparable from its execution. His genius, seconded by the omnipotence of fashion, has brought chivalry again into temporary favour. Fine ladies and gentlemen now talk indeed of donjons, keeps, tabards, scutcheons, tressures, caps of main-

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tenance, portcullises, wimples, and we know not what besides; just as they did in the days of Dr Darwin's popularity, of gnomes, sylphs, oxygen, gossamer, polygynia, and polyandria. That fashion, however, passed rapidly away, and Mr Scott should take care that a different sort of pedantry does not produce the same effects."

The detailed exposition of faults follows; and it is, I am sure, done in a style on which the critic cannot now reflect with perfect equanimity, any more than on the lofty and decisive tone of the sweeping paragraphs by which it was introduced. All this, however, I can suppose Scott to have gone through with great composure; but he must, I think, have wondered, to say the least, when he found himself accused of having "throughout neglected Scottish feelings and Scottish characters!" — He who had just poured out all the patriotic enthusiasm of his soul in so many passages of Marmion which every Scotchman to the end of time will have by heart; painted the capital, the court, the camp, the heroic old chieftains of Scotland, in colours instinct with a fervour that can never die; and dignified the most fatal of her national misfortunes by a celebration as loftily pathetic as ever blended pride with sorrow, — a battle-piece which even his critic had pronounced to be the noblest save in Homer! But not even this injustice was likely to wound him very deeply. Coming from one of the recent witnesses of his pas-

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sionate agitation on *the Mound*, perhaps he would only smile at it.

At all events, Scott could make allowance for the petulancies into which men the least disposed to injure the feelings of others will sometimes be betrayed, when the critical rod is in their hands. He assured Mr Jeffrey that the article had not disturbed his digestion, though he hoped neither his booksellers nor the public would agree with the opinions it expressed; and begged he would come to dinner at the hour previously appointed. Mr Jeffrey appeared accordingly, and was received by his host with the frankest cordiality; but had the mortification to observe that the mistress of the house, though perfectly polite, was not quite so easy with him as usual. She, too, behaved herself with exemplary civility during the dinner; but could not help saying, in her broken English, when her guest was departing, "Well, good night, Mr Jeffrey — dey tell me you have abused Scott in de Review, and I hope Mr Constable has paid *you* very well for writing it." This anecdote was not perhaps worth giving; but it has been printed already in an exaggerated shape, so I thought it as well to present the edition which I have derived from the lips of all the three persons concerned. No one, I am sure, will think the worse of any of them for it, — least of all of Mrs Scott. She might well be pardoned

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if she took to herself more than her own share in the misadventures as well as the successes of the most affectionate of protectors. It was, I believe, about this time when, as Scott has confessed, "the popularity of Marmion gave him such a *heeze* he had for a moment almost lost his footing," that a shrewd and sly observer, Mrs Grant of Laggan, said, wittily enough, upon leaving a brilliant assembly where the poet had been surrounded by all the buzz and glare of fashionable ecstacy — "Mr Scott always seems to me like a glass, through which the rays of admiration pass without sensibly affecting it; but the bit of paper that lies beside it will presently be in a blaze — and no wonder."

I shall not, after so much of and about criticism, say any thing more of Marmion in this place, than that I have always considered it as, on the whole, the greatest of Scott's poems. There is a certain light, easy, virgin charm about the Lay, which we look for in vain through the subsequent volumes of his verse; but the superior strength, and breadth, and boldness both of conception and execution, in the Marmion, appear to me indisputable. The great blot, the combination of *mean felony* with so many noble qualities in the character of the hero, was, as the poet says, severely commented on at the time by the most ardent of his early friends, Leyden; but though he admitted the justice of that criticism,

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he chose "to let the tree lie as it had fallen." He was also sensible that many of the subordinate and connecting parts of the narrative are flat, harsh, and obscure—but would never make any serious attempt to do away with these imperfections; and perhaps they, after all, heighten by contrast the effect of the passages of high-wrought enthusiasm which alone he considered, in after days, with satisfaction. As for the "epistolary dissertations," it must, I take it, be allowed that they interfered with the flow of the story, when readers were turning the leaves with the first ardour of curiosity; and they were not, in fact, originally intended to be interwoven in any fashion with the romance of Marmion. Though the author himself does not allude to, and had perhaps forgotten the circumstance, when writing the Introductory Essay of 1830 — they were announced, by an adver vertisement early in 1807, as "Six Epistles from Ettrick Forest," to be published in a separate volume, similar to that of the Ballads and Lyrical Pieces; and perhaps it might have been better that this first plan had been adhered to. But however that may be, are there any pages, among all he ever wrote, that one would be more sorry he should not have written? They are among the most delicious portraitures that genius ever painted of itself,— buoyant, virtuous, happy genius — exulting in its own energies, yet possessed and mastered by a clear.

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calm, modest mind, and happy only in diffusing happiness around it.

With what gratification those Epistles were read by the friends to whom they were addressed, it would be superfluous to show. He had, in fact, painted them almost as fully as himself; and who might not have been proud to find a place in such a gallery? The tastes and habits of six of those men, in whose intercourse Scott found the greatest pleasure when his fame was approaching its meridian splendour, are thus preserved for posterity; and when I reflect with what avidity we catch at the least hint which seems to afford us a glimpse of the intimate circle of any great poet of former ages, I cannot but believe that posterity would have held this record precious, even had the individuals been in themselves far less remarkable than a Rose, an Ellis, a Heber, a Skene, a Marriott, and an Erskine.

Many other friends, however, have found a part in these affectionate sketches; and I doubt whether any manifestation of public applause afforded the poet so much pleasure as the letter in which one of these, alluded to in the fourth Epistle as then absent from Scotland by reason of his feeble health, acknowledged the emotions that had been stirred in him when he came upon that unexpected page. This was Colin Mackenzie of Pórtmore, the same who beat him in a competition of rhymes at the High School, and

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whose ballad of *Ellandonnan Castle* had been introduced into the third volume of the Minstrelsy. This accomplished and singularly modest man, now no more, received Marmion at Lympstone in Devonshire. "My dear Walter," he says, "amidst the greetings that will crowd on you, I know that those of a hearty, sincere, admiring old friend will not be coldly taken. I am not going to attempt an enumeration of beauties, but I must thank you for the elegant and delicate allusion in which you express your friendship for myself — Forbes — and, above all, that sweet memorial of his late excellent father.* I find I have got the *mal de pays*, and must return to enjoy the sight and society of a few chosen friends. You are not unaware of the place you hold on my list, and your description of our *committees*† has inspired me with tenfold ardour to renew a pleasure so highly enjoyed, and remembered with such enthusiasm. Adieu, my dear friend. Ever yours,

C. M."

His next-door neighbour at Ashestiel, Mr Pringle of Whytbank, "the long-descended lord of Yair," writes not less touchingly on the verses in the 2d

* Mr Mackenzie had married a daughter of Sir William Forbes of Pitsligo, Bart., the biographer of Beattie.

† The supper meetings of the Cavalry Club. — See *Marmion*, Introduction to Canto IV.

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Epistle, where his beautiful place is mentioned, and the poet introduces

> " those sportive boys,
> Companions of his mountain joys" —

and paints the rapture with which they had heard him " call Wallace' rampart holy ground." " Your own benevolent heart," says the good laird, " would have enjoyed the scene, could you have witnessed the countenances of my little flock grouped round your book; and perhaps you would have discovered that the father, though the least audible at that moment, was not the most insensible to the honour bestowed upon his children and his parent stream, both alike dear to his heart. May my boys feel an additional motive to act well, that they may cast no discredit upon their early friend!"

But there was one personal allusion which, almost before his ink was dry, the poet would fain have cancelled. Lord Scott, the young heir of Buccleuch, whose casual absence from " Yarrow's bowers" was regretted in that same epistle (addressed to his tutor, Mr Marriott) —

> " No youthful baron's left to grace
> The forest sheriff's lonely chase,
> And ape in manly step and tone
> The majesty of Oberon."

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— This promising boy had left Yarrow to revisit it no more. He died a few days after Marmion was published, and Scott, in writing on the event to his uncle Lord Montagu (to whom the poem was inscribed), signified a fear that these verses might now serve but to quicken the sorrows of the mother. Lord Montagu answers — "I have been able to ascertain Lady Dalkeith's feelings in a manner that will, I think, be satisfactory to you, particularly as it came from herself, without my giving her the pain of being asked. In a letter I received yesterday, giving directions about some books, she writes as follows:—'And pray send me Marmion too—this may seem odd to you, but at some moments I am soothed by things which at other times drive me almost mad.'" On the 7th of April, Scott says to Lady Louisa Stuart — "The death of poor dear Lord Scott was such a stunning blow to me, that I really felt for some time totally indifferent to the labours of literary correction. I had very great hopes from that boy, who was of an age to form, on the principles of his father and grandfather, his feelings towards the numerous families who depend on them. But God's will be done. I intended to have omitted the lines referring to him in Marmion in the second edition; for as to adding any, I could as soon write the Iliad. But I am now glad I altered my intention, as Lady Dalkeith has sent for the book, and

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dwells with melancholy pleasure on whatever recalls the memory of the poor boy. She has borne her distress like an angel, as she is, and always has been; but God only can cure the wounds he inflicts."

One word more as to these personal allusions. While he was correcting a second proof of the passage where Pitt and Fox are mentioned together, at Stanmore Priory, in April 1807, Lord Abercorn suggested that the compliment to the Whig statesman ought to be still further heightened, and several lines—

> "For talents mourn untimely lost,
> *When best employed, and wanted most,*" &c.—*

were added accordingly. I have heard, indeed, that they came from the Marquis's own pen. Ballantyne, however, from some inadvertence, had put the sheet to press before the *revise*, as it is called, arrived in Edinburgh, and some few copies got abroad in which the additional couplets were omitted. A London journal (the Morning Chronicle) was stupid and malignant enough to insinuate that the author had

* In place of this couplet, and the ten lines which follow it, the original MS. of Marmion has only the following:

> "If genius high and judgment sound,
> And wit that loved to play, not wound,
> And all the reasoning powers divine,
> To penetrate, resolve, combine,
> Could save one mortal of the herd
> From error—Fox had never err'd."

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his presentation copies struck off with, or without, them — according as they were for Whig or Tory hands. I mention the circumstance now, only because I see by a letter of Heber's that Scott had thought it worth his while to contradict the absurd charge in the newspapers of the day.

The feelings of political partisanship find no place in this poem; but though the Edinburgh reviewers chose to complain of its "manifest neglect of *Scottish* feelings," I take leave to suspect that the boldness and energy of *British* patriotism which breathes in so many passages, may have had more share than that alleged omission in pointing the pen that criticised Marmion. Scott had sternly and indignantly rebuked and denounced the then too prevalent spirit of anti-national despondence; he had put the trumpet to his lips, and done his part, at least, to sustain the hope and resolution of his countrymen in that struggle from which it was the doctrine of the Edinburgh Review that no sane observer of the times could anticipate any thing but ruin and degradation. He must ever be considered as the "mighty minstrel" of the Antigallican war; and it was Marmion that first announced him in that character.

Be all this as it may, Scott's connexion with the Edinburgh Review was now broken off; and indeed it was never renewed, except in one instance, many years after, when the strong wish to serve poor

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Maturin shook him for a moment from his purpose. The loftiest and purest of human beings seldom act but under a mixture of motives, and I shall not attempt to guess in what proportions he was swayed by aversion to the political doctrines which the journal had lately been avowing with increased openness —by dissatisfaction with its judgments of his own works—or, lastly, by the feeling that, whether those judgments were or were not just, it was but an idle business for him to assist by his own pen the popularity of the vehicle that diffused them. That he was influenced more or less by all of these considerations, appears highly probable; and I fancy I can trace some indications of each of them in a letter with which I am favoured by an old friend of mine, —a warm lover of literature, and a sincere admirer both of Scott and Jeffrey, and though numbered among the Tories in the House of Commons, yet one of the most liberal section of his party,—who happened to visit Scotland shortly after the article on Marmion appeared, and has set down his recollections of the course of table-talk at a dinner where he for the first time met Scott in company with the brilliant editor of the Edinburgh Review:—

"There were," he says, "only a few people besides the two lions—and assuredly I have seldom passed a more agreeable day. A thousand subjects of literature, antiquities, and manners, were started,

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and much was I struck, as you may well suppose, by the extent, correctness, discrimination, and accuracy of Jeffrey's information; equally so with his taste. acuteness, and wit, in dissecting every book, author, and story, that came in our way. Nothing could surpass the variety of his knowledge, but the easy rapidity of his manner of producing it. He was then in his meridian. Scott, delighted to draw him out, delighted also to talk himself, and displayed, I think, even a larger range of anecdote and illustration; remembering every thing, whether true or false, that was characteristic or impressive; every thing that was good, or lovely, or lively. It struck me that there was this great difference — Jeffrey, for the most part, entertained us, when books were under discussion, with the detection of faults, blunders, absurdities, or plagiarisms: Scott took up the matter where he left it, recalled some compensating beauty or excellence for which no credit had been allowed, and by the recitation, perhaps, of one fine stanza, set the poor victim on his legs again. I believe it was just about this time that Scott had abandoned his place in Mr Jeffrey's corps. The journal had been started among the clever young society with which Edinburgh abounded when they were both entering life as barristers; and Jeffrey's principal co-adjutors for some time were Sydney Smith, Brougham, Horner, Scott himself—and on scientific subjects,

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Playfair; but clever contributors were sought for in all quarters. Wit and fun were the first desiderata, and joined with general talent and literature, carried all before them. Neutrality, or something of the kind, as to party politics, seems to have been originally asserted—the plan being, as Scott understood, not to avoid such questions altogether, but to let them be handled by Whig or Tory indifferently, if only the writer could make his article captivating in point of information and good writing. But it was not long before Brougham dipped the concern deep in witty Whiggery; and it was thought at the time that some very foolish neglects on the part of Pitt had a principal share in making several of these brilliant young men decide on carrying over their weapons to the enemy's camp. Scott was a strong Tory, nay, by family recollections and poetical feelings of association, a Jacobite. Jeffrey, however, was an early friend—and thus there was a confliction of feelings on both sides. Scott, as I was told, remonstrated against the deepening Whiggery—Jeffrey alleged that he could not resist the wit. Scott offered to try his hand at a witty bit of Toryism—but the editor pleaded off, upon the danger of inconsistency. These differences first cooled—and soon dissolved their federation.—To return to our gay dinner. As the claret was taking its rounds, Jeffrey introduced some good-natured eulogy of his old sup-

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porters — Sydney Smith, Brougham, and Horner. 'Come,' says Scott, 'you can't say too much about Sydney or Brougham, but I will not admire your Horner: he always put me in mind of Obadiah's bull, who, although, as Father Shandy observed, he never produced a calf, went through his business with such a grave demeanour, that he always maintained his credit in the parish!' The fun of the illustration tempted him to this sally, I believe; but Horner's talents did not lie in humour, and his economical labours were totally uncongenial to the mind of Scott."

I have printed this *memorandum* just as it came to my hands; but I certainly never understood the writer to be pledging himself for the story which he gives "as he was told." No person who knows anything of the character and history of Mr Jeffrey can for a moment believe that he ever dreamt of regulating the political tone of his Review upon such considerations as are here ascribed to him. It is obvious that the light *badinage* of the Outer-House had been misinterpreted by some matter-of-fact *umbra* of the *Mountain*.

I shall conclude this chapter with a summary of booksellers' accounts. Marmion was first printed in a splendid quarto, price one guinea and a half. The 2000 copies of this edition were all disposed of in less than a month, when a second of 3000 copies, in

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8vo, was sent to press. There followed a third and a fourth edition, each of 3000, in 1809; a fifth of 2000, early in 1810; and a sixth of 3000, in two volumes, crown 8vo, with twelve designs by Singleton, before the end of that year; a seventh of 4000, and an eighth of 5000 copies 8vo, in 1811; a ninth of 3000 in 1815; a tenth of 500, in 1820; an eleventh of 500, and a twelfth of 2000 copies, in foolscap, both in 1825. The legitimate sale in this country, therefore, down to the time of its being included in the first collective edition of his poetical works, amounted to 31,000; and the aggregate of that sale, down to the period at which I am writing (May 1836), may be stated at 50,000 copies. I presume it is right for me to facilitate the task of future historians of our literature by preserving these details as often as I can. Such particulars respecting many of the great works even of the last century, are already sought for with vain regret; and I anticipate no day when the student of English civilisation will pass without curiosity the contemporary reception of the Tale of Flodden Field.

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CHAPTER XVII.

Edition of Dryden published — and criticised by Mr Hallam — Weber's Romances — Editions of Queenhoo-Hall — Captain Carleton's Memoirs — The Memoirs of Robert Cary, Earl of Monmouth — The Sadler Papers — and the Somers' Tracts — Edition of Swift begun — Letters to Joanna Baillie and George Ellis on the affairs of the Peninsula — John Struthers — James Hogg — Visit of Mr Morritt — Mr Morritt's Reminiscences of Ashestiel — Scott's Domestic Life.

1808.

Before Marmion was published, a heavy task, begun earlier than the poem and continued throughout its progress, had been nearly completed; and there appeared in the last week of April 1808, "The Works of John Dryden, now first collected; illustrated with notes historical, critical, and expla-

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natory, and a Life of the Author. — By Walter Scott, Esq. Eighteen volumes, 8vo." This was the bold speculation of William Miller of Albemarle Street, London; and the editor's fee, at forty guineas the volume, was £756. The bulk of the collection, the neglect into which a majority of the pieces included in it had fallen, the obsoleteness of the party politics which had so largely exercised the author's pen, and the indecorum, not seldom running into flagrant indecency, by which transcendent genius had ministered to the appetites of a licentious age, all combined to make the warmest of Scott's friends and admirers doubt whether even his skill and reputation would be found sufficient to ensure the success of this undertaking. It was, however, better received than any one, except perhaps the courageous bookseller himself, had anticipated. The entire work was reprinted in 1821; and more lately the Life of Dryden has been twice republished in collective editions of Scott's prose miscellanies; nor, perhaps, does that class of his writings include any piece of considerable extent that has, on the whole, obtained higher estimation.

This edition of Dryden was criticised in the Edinburgh Review for October 1808, with great ability, and, on the whole, with admirable candour. The industry and perspicacity with which Scott had carried through his editorial researches and annota-

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tions were acknowledged in terms which, had he known the name of his reviewer, must have been doubly gratifying to his feelings; and it was confessed that, in the life of his author, he had corrected with patient honesty, and filled up with lucid and expansive detail, the sometimes careless and often naked outline of Johnson's masterly Essay on the same subject. It would be superfluous to quote in this place a specimen of critical skill which has already enjoyed such wide circulation, and which will hereafter, no doubt, be included in the miscellaneous prose works of HALLAM. The points of political faith on which that great writer dissents from the editor of Dryden, would, even if I had the inclination to pursue such a discussion, lead me far astray from the immediate object of these pages; they embrace questions on which the best and wisest of our countrymen will probably continue to take opposite sides, as long as our past history excites a living interest, and our literature is that of an active nation. On the poetical character of Dryden I think the editor and his critic will be found to have expressed substantially much the same judgment; when they appear to differ, the battle strikes me as being about words rather than things, as is likely to be the case when men of such abilities and attainments approach a subject remote from their personal passions. As might have been expected, the terse

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and dexterous reviewer has often the better in this logomachy; but when the balance is struck, we discover here, as elsewhere, that Scott's broad and masculine understanding had, by whatever happy hardihood, grasped the very result to which others win their way by the more cautious processes of logical investigation. While nothing has been found easier than to attack his details, his general views on critical questions have seldom, if ever, been successfully impugned.

I wish I could believe that Scott's labours had been sufficient to recal Dryden to his rightful station, not in the opinion of those who make literature the business or chief solace of their lives—for with them he had never forfeited it—but in the general favour of the intelligent public. That such has been the case, however, the not rapid sale of two editions, aided as they were by the greatest of living names, can be no proof; nor have I observed among the numberless recent speculations of the English booksellers, a single reprint of even those tales, satires, and critical essays, not to be familiar with which would, in the last age, have been considered as disgraceful in any one making the least pretension to letters. In the hope of exciting the curiosity, at least, of some of the thousands of young persons who seem to be growing up in contented ignorance of one of the greatest of our masters, I shall tran-

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scribe what George Ellis — whose misgivings about Scott's edition, when first undertaken, had been so serious — was pleased to write some months after its completion.

"Claremont, 23d September 1808.

"I must confess that I took up the book with some degree of trepidation, considering an edition of such a writer as on every account *periculosæ plenum opus aleæ;* but as soon as I became acquainted with your plan I proceeded boldly, and really feel at this moment sincerely grateful to you for much exquisite amusement. It now seems to me that your critical remarks ought to have occurred to myself. Such a passionate admirer of Dryden's fables, the noblest specimen of versification (in my mind) that is to be found in any modern language, ought to have perused his theatrical pieces with more candour than I did, and to have attributed to the bad taste of the age, rather than to his own, the numerous defects by which those hasty compositions are certainly deformed. I ought to have considered that whatever Dryden wrote must, for some reason or other, be worth reading; that his bombast and his indelicacy, however disgusting, were not without their use to any one who took an interest in our literary history; that — in short, there are a thousand reflections which I ought to have made and never did make,

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and the result was that *your* Dryden was to me a perfectly new book. It is certainly painful to see a race-horse in a hackney-chaise, but when one considers that he will suffer infinitely less from the violent exertion to which he is condemned, than a creature of inferior race — and that the wretched cock-tail on whom the same task is usually imposed, must shortly become a martyr in the service, — one's conscience becomes more at ease, and we are enabled to enjoy Dr Johnson's favourite pleasure of rapid motion without much remorse on the score of its cruelty. Since, then, your hackneyman is not furnished with a whip, and you can so easily canter from post to post, go on and prosper!"

To return for a moment to Scott's Biography of Dryden — the only life of a great poet which he has left us, and also his only detailed work on the personal fortunes of one to whom literature was a profession — it was penned just when he had begun to apprehend his own destiny. On this point of view, forbidden to contemporary delicacy, we may now pause with blameless curiosity. Seriously as he must have in those days been revolving the hazards of literary enterprise, he could not, it is probable, have handled any subject of this class without letting out here and there thoughts and feelings proper to his own biographer's province; but, widely as he and his predecessor may appear to stand apart as

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regards some of the most important both of intellectual and moral characteristics, they had nevertheless many features of resemblance, both as men and as authors; and I doubt if the entire range of our annals could have furnished a theme more calculated to keep Scott's scrutinizing interest awake, than that which opened on him as he contemplated step by step the career of Dryden.

There are grave lessons which that story was not needed to enforce upon his mind: he required no such beacon to make him revolt from paltering with the dignity of woman, or the passions of youth, or insulting by splenetic levities the religious convictions of any portion of his countrymen. But Dryden's prostitution of his genius to the petty bitternesses of political warfare, and the consequences both as to the party he served, and the antagonists he provoked, might well supply matter for serious consideration to the author of the Melville song. "Where," says Scott, "is the expert swordman that does not delight in the flourish of his weapon? and a brave man will least of all withdraw himself from his ancient standard when the tide of battle beats against it." But he says also,—and I know enough of his own then recent experiences, in his intercourse with some who had been among his earliest and dearest associates, not to apply the language to the circumstances that suggested it—"He who keenly engages in political

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controversy must not only encounter the vulgar abuse which he may justly contemn, but the altered eye of friends whose regard is chilled." Nor, when he adds that "the protecting zeal of his party did not compensate Dryden for the loss of those whom he alienated in their service," can I help connecting this reflection too with his own subsequent abstinence from party personalities, in which, had the expert swordsman's delight in the flourish of his weapon prevailed, he might have rivalled the success of either Dryden or Swift, to be repaid like them by the settled rancour of Whigs, and the jealous ingratitude of Tories.

It is curious enough to compare the hesitating style of his apology for that tinge of evanescent superstition which seems to have clouded occasionally Dryden's bright and solid mind, with the open avowal that he has "pride in recording his author's decided admiration of old ballads and popular tales;" and perhaps his personal feelings were hardly less his prompter where he dismisses with brief scorn the sins of negligence and haste, which had been so often urged against Dryden. "Nothing," he says, "is so easily attained as the power of presenting the extrinsic qualities of fine painting, fine music, or fine poetry; the beauty of colour and outline, the combination of notes, the melody of versification, may be imitated by artists of mediocrity; and many will

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view, hear, or peruse their performances, without being able positively to discover why they should not. since composed according to all the rules, afford pleasure equal to those of Raphael, Handel, or Dryden. The deficiency lies in the vivifying spirit, which, like *alcohol*, may be reduced to the same principle in all the fine arts. The French are said to possess the best possible rules for building ships of war, although not equally remarkable for their power of fighting them. When criticism becomes a pursuit separate from poetry, those who follow it are apt to forget that the legitimate ends of the art for which they lay down rules, are instruction and delight, and that these points being attained, by what road soever, entitles a poet to claim the prize of successful merit. Neither did the learned authors of these disquisitions sufficiently attend to the general disposition of mankind, which cannot be contented even with the happiest imitations of former excellence, but demands novelty as a necessary ingredient for amusement. To insist that every epic poem shall have the plan of the Iliad, and every tragedy be modelled by the rules of Aristotle, resembles the principle of the architect who should build all his houses with the same number of windows and of stories. It happened, too, inevitably, that the critics, in the plenipotential authority which they exercised, often assumed as indispensable requisites of the drama, or epopeia, circumstances which.

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in the great authorities they quoted, were altogether accidental or indifferent. These they erected into laws, and handed down as essential; although the forms prescribed have often as little to do with the merit and success of the original from which they are taken, as the shape of the drinking glass with the flavour of the wine which it contains." These sentences appear, from the dates, to have been penned immediately after the biographer of Dryden (who wrote no epic) had perused the Edinburgh Review on Marmion.

I conclude with a passage, in writing which he seems to have anticipated the only serious critical charge that was ever brought against his edition of Dryden as a whole—namely, the loose and irregular way in which his own æsthetical notions are indicated, rather than expounded. "While Dryden," says Scott, "examined, discussed, admitted, or rejected the rules proposed by others, he forbore, from *prudence, indolence,* or *a regard for the freedom of Parnassus,* to erect himself into a legislator. His doctrines are scattered without system or pretence to it:—it is impossible to read far without finding some maxim for doing, or forbearing, which every student of poetry will do well to engrave upon the tablets of his memory; but the author's mode of instruction is neither harsh nor dictatorial."

On the whole, it is impossible to doubt that the

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success of Dryden in rapidly reaching, and till the end of a long life holding undisputed, the summit of public favour and reputation, in spite of his "brave neglect" of minute finishing, narrow laws, and prejudiced authorities, must have had a powerful effect in nerving Scott's hope and resolution for the wide ocean of literary enterprise into which he had now fairly launched his bark. Like Dryden, he felt himself to be "amply stored with acquired knowledge, much of it the fruits of early reading and application;" anticipated that, though, "while engaged in the hurry of composition, or overcome by the lassitude of continued literary labour," he should sometimes "draw with too much liberality on a tenacious memory," no "occasional imperfections would deprive him of his praise"; in short, made up his mind that "pointed and nicely-turned lines, sedulous study, and long and repeated correction and revision," would all be dispensed with,—provided their place were supplied, as in Dryden, by "rapidity of conception, a readiness of expressing every idea, without losing any thing by the way," "perpetual animation and elasticity of thought;" and language "never laboured, never loitering, never (in Dryden's own phrase) *cursedly confined.*"

Scott's correspondence, about the time when his Dryden was published, is a good deal occupied with

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a wild project of his friend Henry Weber — that of an extensive edition of our Ancient Metrical Romances, for which, in their own original dimensions, the enthusiastic German supposed the public appetite to have been set on edge by the "Specimens" of Ellis, and imperfectly gratified by the text of Sir Tristrem. Scott assured him that Ellis's work had been popular, rather in spite than by reason of the antique verses introduced here and there among his witty and sparkling prose; while Ellis told him, with equal truth, that the Tristrem had gone through two editions, simply owing to the celebrity of its editor's name; and that, of a hundred that had purchased the book, ninety-nine had read only the preface and notes, but not one syllable of True Thomas's "quaint Inglis." Weber, in reply to Ellis, alleged that Scott had not had leisure to consider his plan so fully as it deserved; that nothing could prevent its success, provided Scott would write a preliminary essay, and let his name appear in the title-page, along with his own; and though Scott wholly declined this last proposal, he persisted for some months in a negotiation with the London booksellers, which ended as both his patrons had foreseen.

"But how is this?" — (Ellis writes) — "Weber tells me he is afraid Mr Scott will not be able to do any thing for the recommendation of his *Romances*, because he is himself engaged in no less than five

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different literary enterprises, some of them of immense extent. Five? Why, no combination of blood and bone can possibly stand this; and Sir John Sinclair, however successful in pointing out the best modes of feeding common gladiators, has not discovered the means of training minds to such endless fatigue. I dare not ask you for an account of these projects, nor even for a letter during the continuance of this seven years' apprenticeship, and only request that you will, after the completion of your labours, take measures to lay my ghost, which will infallibly be walking before that time, and suffering all the pains of unsatisfied curiosity. Seriously, I don't quite like your imposing on yourself such a series of tasks. Some *one* is, I believe, always of service—because, whatever you write at the same time, *con amore*, comes in as a relaxation, and is likely to receive more spirit and gaiety from that circumstance; besides which, every species of study perhaps is capable of furnishing allusions, and adding vigour and solidity to poetry. Too constant attention to what they call their art, and too much solicitude about its minutiæ, has been, I think, the fault of every poet since Pope; perhaps it was his too—perhaps the frequent and varied studies imposed upon him by his necessities contributed, in some measure, to Dryden's characteristic splendour of style. Yet, surely, the best poet of the age ought not to be in-

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cessantly employed in the drudgeries of literature. I shall lament if you are effectually distracted from the exercise of the talent in which you are confessedly without a rival."

The poet answers as follows:—"My giving my name to Weber's Romances is out of the question, as assuredly I have not time to do any thing that can entitle it to stand in his titlepage; but I will do all I can for him in the business. By the by, I wish he would be either more chary in his communications on the subject of my employments, or more accurate. I often employ his assistance in making extracts, &c. and I may say to him as Lord Ogleby does to Canton, that he never sees me *badiner* a little with a subject, but he suspects mischief—to wit, an edition. In the mean time, suffice it to say, that I have done with poetry for some time—it is a scourging crop, and ought not to be hastily repeated. Editing, therefore, may be considered as a green crop of turnips or peas, extremely useful for those whose circumstances do not admit of giving their farm a summer fallow. Swift is my *grande opus* at present, though I am under engagements, of old standing, to write a Life of Thomson from some original materials. I have completed an edition of some State Papers of Sir Ralph Sadler, which I believe you will find curious; I have, moreover, arranged for republication the more early volumes of Somers's Tracts; but these

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are neither toilsome nor exhausting labours. Swift, in fact, is my only task of great importance. My present official employment leaves my time very much my own, even while the courts are sitting—and entirely so in the vacation. My health is strong, and my mind active; I will therefore do as much as I can with justice to the tasks I have undertaken, and rest when advanced age and more independent circumstances entitle me to repose."

This letter is dated Ashestiel, October 8, 1808; but it carries us back to the month of April, when the Dryden was completed. His engagements with London publishers respecting the Somers and the Sadler, were, I believe, entered into before the end of 1807; but Constable appears to have first ascertained them, when he accompanied the second cargo of Marmion to the great southern market; and, alarmed at the prospect of losing his hold on Scott's industry, he at once invited him to follow up his Dryden by an Edition of Swift on the same scale,—offering, moreover, to double the rate of payment which he had contracted for with the London publisher of the Dryden; that is to say, to give him £1500 for the new undertaking. This munificent tender was accepted without hesitation; and as early as May 1808, I find Scott writing to his literary allies in all directions for books, pamphlets, and MSS.

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materials likely to be serviceable in completing and illustrating the Life and Works of the Dean of St Patrick's. While these were accumulating about him, which they soon did in greater abundance than he had anticipated, he concluded his labours on Sadler's State Papers, characteristically undervalued in his letter to Ellis, and kept pace, at the same time, with Ballantyne, as the huge collection of the Somers' Tracts continued to move through the press. The Sadler was published in the course of 1809, in three large volumes, quarto; but the last of the thirteen equally ponderous tomes to which Somers extended, was not dismissed from his desk until towards the conclusion of 1812.

But these were not his only tasks during the summer and autumn of 1808; and if he had not "*five* different enterprises" on his hands when Weber said so to Ellis, he had more than five very soon after. He edited this year Strutt's unfinished romance of Queenhoo-Hall, and equipped the fourth volume, with a conclusion in the fashion of the original;* but how little he thought of this matter may be guessed from one of his notes to Ballantyne, in which he says, "I wish you would see how far the copy of Queenhoo-Hall, sent last night, extends.

* See General Preface to Waverley, pp. xiv–xvii. and Appendix No. II. p. lxv.

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that I may not write more nonsense than enough." The publisher of this work was John Murray, of London. It was immediately preceded by a reprint of Captain Carleton's Memoirs of the War of the Spanish Succession, to which he gave a lively preface and various notes; and followed by a similar edition of the Memoirs of Robert Cary Earl of Monmouth, —each of these being a single octavo, printed by Ballantyne and published by Constable.

The republication of Carleton,* Johnson's eulogy of which fills a pleasant page in Boswell, had probably been suggested by the lively interest which Scott took in the first outburst of Spanish patriotism consequent on Napoleon's transactions at Bayonne. There is one passage in the preface which I must indulge myself by transcribing. Speaking of the absurd recall of Peterborough, from the command in which he had exhibited such a wonderful combination of patience and prudence with military daring, he says — "One ostensible reason was, that Peterborough's parts were of too lively and mercurial a quality, and that his letters showed more wit than

* It seems to be now pretty generally believed that Carleton's Memoirs were among the numberless fabrications of De Foe; but in this case (if the fact indeed be so), as in that of his *Cavalier*, he no doubt had before him the rude journal of some officer who had fought and bled in the campaigns described with such an inimitable air of truth.

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became a General;—a commonplace objection, raised by the dull malignity of commonplace minds, against those whom they see discharging with ease and indifference the tasks which they themselves execute (if at all) with the sweat of their brow and in the heaviness of their hearts. There is a certain hypocrisy in business, whether civil or military, as well as in religion, which they will do well to observe who, not satisfied with discharging their duty, desire also 'the good repute of men." It was not long before some of the dull malignants of the Parliament House began to insinuate what at length found a dull and dignified mouthpiece in the House of Commons—that if a Clerk of Session had any real business to do, it could not be done well by a man who found time for more literary enterprises than any other author of the age undertook — " wrote more books," Lord Archibald Hamilton serenely added, " than any body could find leisure to read"—and, moreover, mingled in general society as much as many that had no pursuit but pleasure.

The eager struggling of the different booksellers to engage Scott at this time, is a very amusing feature in the voluminous correspondence before me. Had he possessed treble the energy for which it was possible to give any man credit, he could never have encountered a tithe of the projects that the post brought day after day to him, announced with ex-

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travagant enthusiasm, and urged with all the arts of conciliation. I shall mention onlv one out of at least a dozen gigantic schemes which were thus proposed before he had well settled himself to his Swift; and I do so, because something of the kind was a few years later carried into execution. This was a General Edition of British Novelists, beginning with De Foe and reaching to the end of the last century; to be set forth with biographical prefaces and illustrative notes by Scott, and printed of course by Ballantyne. The projector was Murray, who was now eager to start on all points in the race with Constable; but this was not, as we shall see presently, the only business that prompted my enterprising friend's first visit to Ashestiel.

Conversing with Scott, many years afterwards, about the tumult of engagements in which he was thus involved, he said, "Ay, it was enough to tear me to pieces, but there was a wonderful exhilaration about it all: my blood was kept at fever-pitch — I felt as if I could have grappled with anything and everything; then, there was hardly one of all my schemes that did not afford me the means of serving some poor devil of a brother author. There were always huge piles of materials to be arranged, sifted, and indexed — volumes of extracts to be transcribed — journeys to be made hither and thither, for ascertaining little facts and dates, — in short, I could com-

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monly keep half-a-dozen of the ragged regiment of Parnassus in tolerable case." I said he must have felt something like what a locomotive engine on a railway might be supposed to do, when a score of coal waggons are seen linking themselves to it the moment it gets the steam up, and it rushes on its course regardless of the burden. "Yes," said he, laughing, and making a crashing cut with his axe (for we were felling larches); "but there was a cursed lot of dung carts too." He was seldom, in fact, without some of these appendages; and I admired nothing more in him than the patient courtesy, the unwearied gentle kindness with which he always treated them, in spite of their delays and blunders, to say nothing of the almost incredible vanity and presumption which more than one of them often exhibited in the midst of their fawning; and I believe, with all their faults, the worst and weakest of them repaid him by a canine fidelity of affection. This part of Scott's character recalls by far the most pleasing trait in that of his last predecessor in the plentitude of literary authority — Dr Johnson. There was perhaps nothing (except the one great blunder) that had a worse effect on the course of his pecuniary fortunes, than the readiness with which he exerted his interest with the booksellers on behalf of inferior writers. Even from the commencement of his connexion with Constable in particular, I can trace a continual series

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of such applications. They stimulated the already too sanguine publisher to numberless risks; and when these failed, the result was, in one shape or another, some corresponding deduction from the fair profits of his own literary labour. "I like well," Constable was often heard to say in the sequel, "I like well Scott's *ain bairns* — but heaven preserve me from those of his fathering!"

Every now and then, however, he had the rich compensation of finding that his interference had really promoted the worldly interests of some meritorious obscure. Early in 1808 he tasted this pleasure, in the case of a poetical shoemaker of Glasgow, Mr John Struthers, a man of rare worth and very considerable genius, whose "Poor Man's Sabbath" was recommended to his notice by Joanna Baillie, and shortly after published, at his desire, by Mr Constable. He thus writes to Miss Baillie from Ashestiel, on the 9th of May 1808:—

"Your letter found me in this quiet corner, and while it always gives me pride and pleasure to hear from you, I am truly concerned at Constable's unaccountable delays. I suppose that, in the hurry of his departure for London, his promise to write Mr Struthers had escaped; as for any desire to quit his bargain, it is out of the question. If Mr Struthers will send to my house in Castle Street, the manu-

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script designed for the press, I will get him a short bill for the copy-money the moment Constable returns, or perhaps before he comes down. He may rely on the bargain being definitively settled, and the printing will, I suppose, be begun immediately on the great bibliopolist's return; on which occasion I shall have, according to good old phrase, 'a crow to pluck with him, and a pock to put the feathers in.' I heartily wish we could have had the honour to see Miss Agnes and you at our little farm, which is now in its glory — all the twigs bursting into leaf, and all the lambs skipping on the hills. I have been fishing almost from morning till night; and Mrs Scott, and two ladies our guests, are wandering about on the banks in the most Arcadian fashion in the world. We are just on the point of setting out on a pilgrimage to the 'bonny bush aboon Traquhair,' which I believe will occupy us all the morning. Adieu, my dear Miss Baillie. Nothing will give me more pleasure than to hear that you have found the northern breezes fraught with inspiration. You are not entitled to spare yourself, and none is so deeply interested in your labours as your truly respectful friend and admirer,

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S. We quit our quiet pastures to return to Edinburgh on the 10th. So Mr Struthers' parcel

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will find me there, if he is pleased to intrust me with the care of it."

Mr Struthers' volume was unfortunate in bearing a title so very like that of James Grahame's Sabbath, which, though not written sooner, had been published a year or two before. This much interfered with its success, yet it was not on the whole unsuccessful: it put some £30 or £40 into the pocket of a good man, to whom this was a considerable supply; but it made his name and character known, and thus served him far more essentially; for he wisely continued to cultivate his poetical talents without neglecting the opportunity, thus afforded him through them, of pursuing his original calling under better advantages. It is said that the solitary and meditative generation of cobblers have produced a larger list of murders and other domestic crimes than any other mechanical trade except the butchers; but the sons of Crispin have, to balance their account, a not less disproportionate catalogue of poets; and foremost among these stands the pious author of the Poor Man's Sabbath; one of the very few that have had sense and fortitude to resist the innumerable temptations to which any measure of celebrity exposes persons of their class. I believe Mr Struthers still survives to enjoy the retrospect of a long and virtuous life. His letters to Scott are equally credi-

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table to his taste and his feelings, and sometime after we shall find him making a pilgrimage of gratitude to Ashestiel.*

James Hogg was by this time beginning to be generally known and appreciated in Scotland; and the popularity of his "Mountain Bard" encouraged Scott to more strenuous intercession in his behalf. I have before me a long array of letters on this subject, which passed between Scott and the Earl of Dalkeith and his brother Lord Montagu, in 1808. Hogg's prime ambition at this period was to procure an ensigncy in a militia regiment, and he seems to have set little by Scott's representations that the pay of such a situation was very small, and that, if he obtained it, he would probably find his relations with his brother officers far from agreeable. There was, however, another objection which Scott could not hint to the aspirant himself, but which seems to have been duly considered by those who were anxious to promote his views. Militia officers of that day were by no means unlikely to see their nerves put to the test; and the Shepherd's — though he wrote

* I am happy to learn, as this page passes through the press, from my friend Mr John Kerr of Glasgow, that about three years ago Mr Struthers was appointed keeper of Stirling's Library, a collection of some consequence in that city. The selection of him for this respectable situation reflects honour on the directors of the institution. — (December, 1836.)

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some capital war-songs, especially *Donald Macdonald* —were not heroically strung. This was in truth no secret among his early intimates, though he had not measured himself at all exactly on that score, and was even tempted, when he found there was no chance of the militia epaulette, to threaten that he would "list for a soldier" in a marching regiment. Notwithstanding at least one melancholy precedent, the Excise, which would have suited him almost as badly as "hugging Brown Bess," was next thought of; and the Shepherd himself seems to have entered into that plan with considerable alacrity: but I know not whether he changed his mind, or what other cause prevented such an appointment from taking place. After various shiftings he at last obtained, as we shall see, from the late Duke of Buccleuch's munificence, the gratuitous life-rent of a small farm in the vale of Yarrow; and had he contented himself with the careful management of its fields, the rest of his days might have been easy. But he could not withstand the attractions of Edinburgh, which carried him away from Altrive for months every year; and when at home, a warm and hospitable disposition, so often stirred by vanity less pardonable than his, made him convert his cottage into an unpaid hostelrie for the reception of endless troops of thoughtless admirers; and thus, in spite of much help and much forbearance, he was never out of one

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set of pecuniary difficulties before he had began to weave the meshes of some fresh entanglement. *In pace requiescat.* There will never be such an Ettrick Shepherd again.

The following is an extract from a letter of Scott's to his brother Thomas, dated 20th June 1808: —

"Excellent news to-day from Spain —yet I wish the patriots had a leader of genius and influence. I fear the Castilian nobility are more sunk than the common people, and that it will be easier to find armies than generals. A Wallace, Dundee, or Montrose, would be the man for Spain at this moment. It is, however, a consolation, that though the grandees of the earth, when the post of honour becomes the post of danger, may be less ambitious of occupying it, there may be some hidalgo among the mountains of Asturias with all the spirit of the Cid Ruy Diaz, or Don Pelayo, or Don Quixote if you will, whose gallantry was only impeachable from the objects on which he exercised it. It strikes me as very singular to have all the places mentioned in Don Quixote and Gil Blas now the scenes of real and important events. Gazettes dated from Oviedo, and gorges fortified in the Sierra Morena, sounds like history in the land of romance.

"James Hogg has driven his pigs to a bad market. I am endeavouring, as a *pis aller*, to have him made an Excise officer, that station being, with respect to

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Scottish geniuses, the grave of all the Capulets. Witness Adam Smith, Burns," &c.

I mentioned the name of Joanna Baillie (for "who," as Scott says in a letter of this time, "ever speaks of Miss Sappho?") in connexion with the MS. of the Poor Man's Sabbath. From Glasgow, where she had found out Struthers in April, she proceeded to Edinburgh, and took up her abode for a week or two under Scott's roof. Their acquaintance was thus knit into a deep and respectful affection on both sides; and henceforth they maintained a close epistolary correspondence, which will, I think, supply this compilation with some of the most interesting of its materials. But within a few weeks after Joanna's departure, he was to commence another intimacy not less sincere and cordial; and when I name Mr Morritt of Rokeby, I have done enough to prepare many of my readers to expect not inferior gratification from the still more abundant series of letters in which, from this time to the end of his life, Scott communicated his thoughts and feelings to one of the most accomplished men that ever shared his confidence. He had now reached a period of life after which real friendships are but seldom formed; and it is fortunate that another English one had been thoroughly compacted before death cut the ties between him and George Ellis—because his dearest intimates within

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Scotland had of course but a slender part in his written correspondence.

Several friends had written to recommend Mr Morritt to his acquaintance—among others, Mr W. S. Rose and Lady Louisa Stuart. His answer to her ladyship I must insert here, for the sake of the late inimitable Lydia White, who so long ruled without a rival in the soft realm of *blue* Mayfair:—

"Edinburgh, 16th June 1808.

"My Dear Lady Louisa,

"Nothing will give us more pleasure than to have the honour of showing every attention in our power to Mr and Mrs Morritt, and I am particularly happy in a circumstance that at once promises me a great deal of pleasure in the acquaintance of your Ladyship's friends, and affords me the satisfaction of hearing from you again. Pray don't triumph over me too much in the case of Lydia. I stood a very respectable siege; but she caressed my wife, coaxed my children, and made, by dint of cake and pudding, some impression even upon the affections of my favourite dog:—so, when all the outworks were carried, the main fortress had no choice but to surrender on honourable terms. To the best of my thinking, notwithstanding the cerulean hue of her stockings, and a most plentiful stock of eccentric affectation, she is really at bottom a good-natured

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woman, with much liveliness and some talent. She is now set out to the Highlands, where she is likely to encounter many adventures. Mrs Scott and I went as far as Loch Catrine with her, from which jaunt I have just returned. We had most heavenly weather, which was peculiarly favourable to my fair companions' zeal for sketching every object that fell in their way, from a castle to a pigeon-house. Did your Ladyship ever travel with a *drawing* companion? Mine drew like cart-horses, as well in laborious zeal as in effect; for, after all, I could not help hinting that the cataracts delineated bore a singular resemblance to haycocks, and the rocks much correspondence to large old-fashioned cabinets with their folding-doors open. So much for Lydia, whom I left on her journey through the Highlands, but by what route she had not resolved. I gave her three plans, and think it likely she will adopt none of them: moreover, when the executive government of postilions, landlords, and Highland boatmen devolves upon her English servant instead of me, I am afraid the distresses of the errant damsels will fall a little beneath the dignity of romances. All this nonsense is *entre nous*, for Miss White has been activeiy zealous in getting me some Irish correspondence about Swift, and otherwise very obliging.

" It is not with my inclination that I fag for the

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booksellers; but what can I do? My poverty and not my will consents. The income of my office is only reversionary, and my private fortune much limited. My poetical success fairly destroyed my prospects of professional success, and obliged me to retire from the Bar; for though I had a competent share of information and industry, who would trust their cause to the author of the Lay of the Last Minstrel? Now, although I do allow that an author should take care of his literary character, yet I think the least thing that his literary character can do in return is to take some care of the author, who is unfortunately, like Jeremy in *Love for Love*, furnished with a set of tastes and appetites which would do honour to the income of a Duke if he had it. Besides, I go to work with Swift *con amore;* for, like Dryden, he is an early favourite of mine. The Marmion is nearly out, and I have made one or two alterations on the third edition, with which the press is now groaning. So soon as it is, it will make the number of copies published within the space of six months amount to eight thousand, — an immense number surely, and enough to comfort the author's wounded feelings, had the claws of the reviewers been able to reach him through the *steel jack* of true Border indifference. Your Ladyship's much obliged and faithful servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

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Mr and Mrs Morritt reached Edinburgh soon after this letter was written. Scott showed them the lions of the town and its vicinity, exactly as if he had nothing else to attend to but their gratification; and Mr Morritt recollects with particular pleasure one long day spent in rambling along the Esk by Roslin and Hawthornden,

"Where Jonson sat in Drummond's social shade,"

down to the old haunts of Lasswade.

"When we approached that village," says the Memorandum with which Mr Morritt favours me, "Scott, who had laid hold of my arm, turned along the road in a direction not leading to the place where the carriage was to meet us. After walking some minutes towards Edinburgh, I suggested that we were losing the scenery of the Esk, and, besides, had Dalkeith Palace yet to see. 'Yes,' said he, 'and I have been bringing you where there is little enough to be seen—only that Scotch cottage'—one by the road side, with a small garth;—'but, though not worth looking at, I could not pass it. It was our first country-house when newly married, and many a contrivance we had to make it comfortable. I made a dining-table for it with my own hands. Look at these two miserable willow-trees on either side the gate into the enclosure; they are tied together at the top to be an arch, and a cross made

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of two sticks over them is not yet decayed. To be sure, it is not much of a lion to show a stranger; but I wanted to see it again myself, for I assure you that after I had constructed it, *mamma*' (Mrs Scott) ' and I both of us thought it so fine, we turned out to see it by moonlight, and walked backwards from it to the cottage door, in admiration of our own magnificence and its picturesque effect. I did want to see if it was still there — so now we will look after the barouche, and make the best of our way to Dalkeith.' Such were the natural feelings that endeared the Author of Marmion and the Lay to those who ' saw him in his happier hours of social pleasure.' His person at that time may be exactly known from Raeburn's first picture, which had just been executed for his bookseller, Constable, and which was a most faithful likeness of him and his dog Camp. The literal fidelity of the portraiture, however, is its principal merit. The expression is serious and contemplative, very unlike the hilarity and vivacity then habitual to his speaking face, but quite true to what it was in the absence of such excitement. His features struck me at first as commonplace and heavy, — but they were almost always lighted up by the flashes of the mind within. This required a hand more masterly than Raeburn's; and indeed, in my own opinion, Chantrey alone has in his bust attained that, in his case, most difficult task

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of portraying the features faithfully, and yet giving the real and transient expression of the countenance when animated.

"We passed a week in Edinburgh, chiefly in his society and that of his friends the Mackenzies. We were so far on our way to Brahan Castle, in Ross-shire. Scott unlocked all his antiquarian lore, and supplied us with numberless *data*, such as no guide-book could have furnished, and such as his own Monkbarns might have delighted to give. It would be idle to tell how much pleasure and instruction his advice added to a tour in itself so productive of both, as well as of private friendships and intimacies, now too generally terminated by death, but never severed by caprice or disappointment. His was added to the number by our reception now in Edinburgh, and, on our return from the Highlands, at Ashestiel—where he had made us promise to visit him, saying that the farm-house had pigeon-holes enough for such of his friends as could live, like him, on Tweed salmon and Forest mutton. There he was the cherished friend and kind neighbour of every middling Selkirkshire yeoman, just as easily as in Edinburgh he was the companion of clever youth and narrative old age in refined society. He carried us one day to Melrose Abbey or Newark—another, to course with mountain greyhounds by Yarrow braes or St Mary's loch, repeating every ballad or legen-

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dary tale connected with the scenery — and on a third, we must all go to a farmer's *kirn*, or harvest-home, to dance with Border lasses on a barn floor, drink whisky punch, and enter with him into all the gossip and good fellowship of his neighbours, on a complete footing of unrestrained conviviality, equality, and mutual respect. His wife and happy young family were clustered round him, and the cordiality of his reception would have unbent a misanthrope.

"At this period his conversation was more equal and animated than any man's that I ever knew. It was most characterised by the extreme felicity and fun of his illustrations, drawn from the whole encyclopædia of life and nature, in a style sometimes too exuberant for written narrative, but which to him was natural and spontaneous. A hundred stories, always apposite, and often interesting the mind by strong pathos, or eminently ludicrous, were daily told, which, with many more, have since been transplanted, almost in the same language, into the Waverley novels and his other writings. These and his recitations of poetry, which can never be forgotten by those who knew him, made up the charm that his boundless memory enabled him to exert to the wonder of the gaping lovers of wonders. But equally impressive and powerful was the language of his warm heart, and equally wonderful were the

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conclusions of his vigorous understanding, to those who could return or appreciate either. Among a number of such recollections, I have seen many of the thoughts which then passed through his mind embodied in the delightful prefaces annexed late in life to his poetry and novels. Those on literary quarrels and literary irritability are exactly what he then expressed. Keenly enjoying literature as he did, and indulging his own love of it in perpetual composition, he always maintained the same estimate of it as subordinate and auxiliary to the purposes of life, and rather talked of men and events than of books and criticism. Literary fame, he always said, was a bright feather in the cap, but not the substantial cover of a well-protected head. This sound and manly feeling was what I have seen described by some of his biographers as *pride;* and it will always be thought so by those whose own vanity can only be gratified by the admiration of others, and who mistake shows for realities. None valued the love and applause of others more than Scott; but it was to the love and applause of those he valued in return that he restricted the feeling — without restricting the kindness. Men who did not, or would not, understand this, perpetually mistook him — and, after loading him with undesired eulogy, perhaps in his own house neglected common attention or civility to other parts of his family. It was on such an occasion

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that I heard him murmur in my ear, 'Author as I am, I wish these good people would recollect that I began with being a gentleman, and don't mean to give up the character.' Such was all along his feeling, and this, with a slight prejudice common to Scotchmen in favour of ancient and respectable family descent, constituted what in Grub Street is called his *pride*. It was, at least, what Johnson would have justly called *defensive* pride. From all other, and still more from mere vanity, I never knew any man so remarkably free."

The farmer at whose annual *kirn* Scott and all his household were, in those days, regular guests, was Mr Laidlaw, the Duke of Buccleuch's tenant on the lands of Peel, which are only separated from the eastern terrace of Ashestiel by the ravine and its brook. Mr Laidlaw was himself possessed of some landed property in the same neighbourhood, and being considered as wealthy, and fond of his wealth, he was usually called among the country people *Laird Nippy;* an expressive designation which it would be difficult to translate. Though a very dry, demure, and taciturn old presbyterian, he could not resist the Sheriff's jokes; nay, he even gradually subdued his scruples so far as to become a pretty constant attendant at his "*English printed prayers*" on the Sundays; which, indeed, were by this time rather more popular than quite suited the capacity of the

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parlour-chapel. Mr Laidlaw's wife was a woman of superior mind and manners—a great reader, and one of the few to whom Scott liked lending his books; for most strict and delicate was he always in the care of them, and indeed, hardly any trivial occurrence ever seemed to touch his temper at all, except any thing like irreverent treatment of a book. The intercourse between the family at Ashestiel and this worthy woman and her children, was a constant interchange of respect and kindness; but I remember to have heard Scott say that the greatest compliment he had ever received in his life was from the rigid old farmer himself; for, years after he had left Ashestiel, he discovered casually that special care had been taken to keep the turf seat on *the Shirra's knowe* in good repair; and this was much from Nippy.

And here I must set down a story which, most readers will smile to be told, was often repeated by Scott; and always with an air that seemed to me, in spite of his endeavours to the contrary, as grave as the usual aspect of Laird Nippy of the Peel. This neighbour was a distant kinsman of his dear friend William Laidlaw;—so distant, that elsewhere in that condition they would scarcely have remembered any community of blood;—but they both traced their descent, in the ninth degree, to an ancestress who, in the days of John Knox, fell into

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trouble from a suspicion of witchcraft. In her time the Laidlaws were rich and prosperous, and held rank among the best gentry of Tweeddale; but in some evil hour, her husband, the head of his blood. reproached her with her addiction to the black art, and she, in her anger, cursed the name and lineage of Laidlaw. Her youngest son, who stood by, implored her to revoke the malediction; but in vain. Next day, however, on the renewal of his entreaties, she carried him with her into the woods, made him slay a heifer, sacrificed it to the power of evil in his presence, and then, collecting the ashes in her apron, invited the youth to see her commit them to the river. "Follow them," said she, "from stream to pool, as long as they float visible, and as many streams as you shall then have passed, for so many generations shall your descendants prosper. After that, they shall like the rest of the name be poor, and take their part in my curse." The streams he counted were nine; "and now," Scott would say, "look round you in this country, and sure enough the Laidlaws are one and all landless men, with the single exception of Auld Nippy!" Many times had I heard both him and William Laidlaw tell this story, before any suspicion got abroad that Nippy's wealth rested on insecure foundations. Year after year, we never escorted a stranger by the Peel, but I heard the tale;—and at last it came with a new

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conclusion;—"and now, think whatever we choose of it, my good friend Nippy is a bankrupt." *

Mr Morritt's mention of the "happy young family clustered round him" at Mr Laidlaw's *kirn*, reminds me that I ought to say a few words on Scott's method of treating his children in their early days. He had now two boys and two girls;—and he never had more.† He was not one of those who take much

* I understand the use of the word *bankrupt* here has given offence — and possibly it was not the exact word Scott employed. In common parlance, however, a man is said to be *bankrupt*, when his worldly affairs have undergone some disastrous change — and such was certainly the case with Mr Laidlaw — before he left his old possession of the Peel. [1839.]

† I may as well transcribe here the rest of the record in Scott's family Bible. After what was quoted in a former chapter. it thus proceeds: —

24to die Octobris 1799.—*Margareta C. Scott, filium apud Edinburgum edidit.* 15o *Novembris* 1799, *in Ecclesiam Christianam recepta fuit per baptismum dicta filia, nomenque ei adjectum Charlotta Sophia, per virum reverendum Danielem Sandford; sponsoribus prænobili Arthuro Marchione de Downshire. Sophia Dumergue, et Anna Rutherford matre mea.*

"*Margareta C. Scott puerum edidit.* 28vo *Octobris A.D.* 1801 *apud Edinburgum: nomenque ei adjectum Gualterus, cum per v. rev. Doctorem Danielem Sandford baptizatus erat.*

"*M. C. Scott filiam edidit apud Edinburgum* 2do *die Februarij* 1803, *quæ in Ecclesiam recepta fuit per virum reverendum Doctorem Sandford, nomenque ei adjectum Anna Scott.*

"24to Decem: 1805. — *M. C. Scott apud Edinburgum puerum edidit; qui baptizatus erat per virum reverendum Joannem Thomson, Ministrum de Duddingstone prope Edinburgum. nomenque Carolus illi datum.*"

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delight in a mere infant; but no father ever devoted more time and tender care to his offspring than he did to each of his, as they successively reached the age when they could listen to him, and understand his talk. Like their mute playmates, Camp and the greyhounds, they had at all times free access to his study; he never considered their tattle as any disturbance; they went and came as pleased their fancy; he was always ready to answer their questions; and when they, unconscious how he was engaged, entreated him to lay down his pen and tell them a story, he would take them on his knee, repeat a ballad or a legend, kiss them, and set them down again to their marbles or ninepins, and resume his labour as if refreshed by the interruption. From a very early age he made them dine at table, and "to sit up to supper" was the great reward when they had been "very good bairns." In short, he considered it as the highest duty as well as the sweetest pleasure of a parent to be the companion of his children; he partook all their little joys and sorrows, and made his kind unformal instructions to blend so easily and playfully with the current of their own sayings and doings, that so far from regarding him with any distant awe, it was never thought that any sport or diversion could go on in the right way, unless *papa* were of the party, or that the rainiest day could be dull so he were at home.

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Of the irregularity of his own education he speaks with considerable regret, in the autobiographical fragment written this year at Ashestiel; yet his practice does not look as if that feeling had been strongly rooted in his mind;—for he never did show much concern about regulating systematically what is usually called *education* in the case of his own children. It seemed, on the contrary, as if he attached little importance to any thing else, so he could perceive that the young curiosity was excited —the intellect, by whatever springs of interest, set in motion. He detested and despised the whole generation of modern children's books, in which the attempt is made to convey accurate notions of scientific minutiæ: delighting cordially, on the other hand, in those of the preceding age, which, addressing themselves chiefly to the imagination, obtain through it, as he believed, the best chance of stirring our graver faculties also. He exercised the memory, by selecting for tasks of recitation passages of popular verse the most likely to catch the fancy of children; and gradually familiarized them with the ancient history of their own country, by arresting attention, in the course of his own oral narrations, on incidents and characters of a similar description. Nor did he neglect to use the same means of quickening curiosity as to the events of sacred history. On Sunday he never rode — at least not until his growing infirmity

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made his pony almost necessary to him—for it was his principle that all domestic animals have a full right to their Sabbath of rest; but after he had read the church service, he usually walked with his whole family, dogs included, to some favourite spot at a considerable distance from the house—most frequently the ruined tower of Elibank—and there dined with them in the open air on a basket of cold provisions, mixing his wine with the water of the brook beside which they all were grouped around him on the turf; and here, or at home, if the weather kept them from their ramble, his Sunday talk was just such a series of biblical lessons as that which we have preserved for the permanent use of rising generations, in his Tales of a Grandfather, on the early history of Scotland. I wish he had committed that other series to writing too;—how different that would have been from our thousand compilations of dead epitome and imbecile cant! He had his Bible, the Old Testament especially, by heart; and on these days inwove the simple pathos or sublime enthusiasm of Scripture, in whatever story he was telling, with the same picturesque richness as he did, in his week-day tales, the quaint Scotch of Pitscottie, or some rude romantic old rhyme from Barbour's Bruce or Blind Harry's Wallace.

By many external accomplishments, either in girl or boy, he set little store. He delighted to hear

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his daughters sing an old ditty, or one of his own framing; but, so the singer appeared to feel the spirit of her ballad, he was not at all critical of the technical execution. There was one thing, however, on which he fixed his heart hardly less than the ancient Persians of the Cyropædia; like them, next to love of truth, he held love of horsemanship for the prime point of education. As soon as his eldest girl could sit a pony, she was made the regular attendant of his mountain rides; and they all, as they attained sufficient strength, had the like advancement. He taught them to think nothing of tumbles, and habituated them to his own reckless delight in perilous fords and flooded streams; and they all imbibed in great perfection his passion for horses — as well, I may venture to add, as his deep reverence for the more important article of that Persian training. "Without courage," he said, "there cannot be truth; and without truth there can be no other virtue."

He had a horror of boarding-schools; never allowed his girls to learn anything out of his own house; and chose their governess — (Miss Miller) — who about this time was domesticated with them, and never left them while they needed one, — with far greater regard to her kind good temper and excellent moral and religious principles, than to the measure of her attainments in what are called

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fashionable accomplishments. The admirable system of education for boys in Scotland combines all the advantages of public and private instruction; his carried their satchels to the High-School, when the family was in Edinburgh, just as he had done before them, and shared of course the evening society of their happy home. But he rarely, if ever, left them in town, when he could himself be in the country; and at Ashestiel he was, for better or for worse, his eldest boy's daily tutor, after he began Latin.

The following letter will serve, among other things, to supply a few more details of the domestic life of Ashestiel: —

" *To Miss Joanna Baillie — Hampstead.*

" Sept. 20, 1808.

" My Dear Miss Baillie,

" The law, you know, makes the husband answerable for the debts of his wife, and therefore gives him a right to approach her creditors with an offer of payment; so that, after witnessing many fruitless and broken resolutions of my Charlotte, I am determined, rather than she and I shall appear longer insensible of your goodness, to intrude a few lines on you to answer the letter you honoured her with some time ago. The secret reason of her procrastination is, I believe, some terror of writing in

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English—which you know is not her native language—to one who is as much distinguished by her command of it as by the purposes she adapts it to. I wish we had the command of what my old friend Pitscottie calls 'a blink of the sun or a whip of the whirlwind,' to transport you to this solitude before the frost has stript it of its leaves. It is not, indeed (even I must confess), equal in picturesque beauty to the banks of Clyde and Evan;* but it is so sequestered, so simple, and so solitary, that it seems just to have beauty enough to delight its inhabitants, without a single attraction for any visitor, except those who come for its inhabitants' sake. And in good sooth, whenever I was tempted to envy the splendid scenery of the lakes of Westmoreland, I always endeavoured to cure my fit of spleen by recollecting that they attract as many idle, insipid, and indolent gazers, as any celebrated beauty in the land, and that our scene of pastoral hills and pure streams is like Touchstone's mistress, 'a poor thing, but mine own.' I regret, however, that these celebrated beauties should have frowned, wept, or pouted upon you, when you honoured them by your visit in summer. Did Miss Agnes Baillie and you meet with any of the poetical inhabitants of that district —Wordsworth, Southey, or Coleridge? The two

* Miss Baillie was born at Long-Calderwood, near Hamilton, in Lanarkshire.

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former would, I am sure, have been happy in paying their respects to you; with the habits and tastes of the latter I am less acquainted.

"Time has lingered with me from day to day in expectation of being called southward; I now begin to think my journey will hardly take place till winter, or early in spring. One of the most pleasant circumstances attending it will be the opportunity to pay my homage to you, and to claim withal a certain promise concerning a certain play, of which you were so kind as to promise me a reading. I hope you do not permit indolence to lay the paring of her little finger upon you; we cannot afford the interruption to your labours which even that might occasion. And 'what are *you* doing?' your politeness will perhaps lead you to say: in answer,—Why, I am very like a certain ancient king, distinguished in the Edda, who, when Lok paid him a visit,—

> 'Was twisting of collars his dogs to hold,
> And combing the mane of his courser bold.'

If this idle man's employment required any apology, we must seek it in the difficulty of seeking food to make savoury messes for our English guests; for we are eight miles from market, and must call in all the country sports to aid the larder. We had here, two days ago, a very pleasant English family, the Morritts of Rokeby Park, in Yorkshire. The gentle-

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man wandered over all Greece, and visited the Troad, to aid in confuting the hypothesis of old Bryant, who contended that Troy town was not taken by the Greeks. His erudition is, however, not of an overbearing kind, which was lucky for me, who am but a slender classical scholar. Charlotte's kindest and best wishes attend Miss Agnes Baillie, in which I heartily and respectfully join; — to you she offers her best apology for not writing, and hopes for your kind forgiveness. I ought perhaps to make one for taking the task off her hands, but we are both at your mercy; and I am ever your most faithful, obedient, and admiring servant,

WALTER SCOTT

" P. S. — I have had a visit from the author of the Poor Man's Sabbath, whose affairs with Constable are, I hope, settled to his satisfaction. I got him a few books more than were originally stipulated, and have endeavoured to interest Lord Leven,* and through him Mr Wilberforce, and through them both, the saints in general, in the success of this modest and apparently worthy man. Lord Leven has promised his exertions; and the interest of the party,

* Alexander, tenth Earl of Leven, had married a lady of the English family of Thornton, whose munificent charities are familiar to the readers of Cowper's Life and Letters; hence, probably, his Lordship's influence with the party alluded to in the text.

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if exerted, would save a work tenfold inferior in real merit. What think you of Spain? The days of William Wallace and the Cid Ruy Diaz de Bivar seem to be reviving there."

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CHAPTER XVIII.

Quarrel with Messrs Constable and Hunter — John Ballantyne established as a Bookseller in Edinburgh — Scott's Literary Projects — The Edinburgh Annual Register, &c. — Meeting of James Ballantyne and John Murray — Murray's visit to Ashestiel — Politics — The Peninsular War — Project of the Quarterly Review — Correspondence with Ellis, Gifford, Morritt, Southey, Sharpe, &c.

1808–1809.

The reader does not need to be reminded that Scott at this time had business enough on his hand, besides combing the mane of Brown Adam, and twisting couples for Douglas and Percy. He was deep in Swift; and the Ballantyne press was groaning under a multitude of works, some of them already mentioned, with almost all of which his hand as well as

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his head had something, more or less, to do. But a serious change was about to take place in his relations with the spirited publishing house which had hitherto been the most efficient supporters of that press; and his letters begin to be much occupied with differences and disputes which, uninteresting as the details would now be, must have cost him many anxious hours in the apparently idle autumn of 1808. Mr Constable had then for his partner Mr Alexander Gibson Hunter, afterwards Laird of Blackness, to whose intemperate language, much more than to any part of Constable's own conduct, Scott ascribed this unfortunate alienation; which, however, as well as most of my friend's subsequent misadventures, I am inclined to trace in no small degree to the influence which a third person, hitherto unnamed, was about this time beginning to exercise over the concerns of James Ballantyne.

John Ballantyne, a younger brother of Scott's school-fellow, was originally destined for the paternal trade of a *merchant* — (that is to say, a dealer in everything from fine broadcloth to children's tops) — at Kelso. The father seems to have sent him when very young to London, where, whatever else he may have done in the way of professional training, he spent some time in the banking-house of Messrs Currie. On returning to Kelso, however, the "*department*" which more peculiarly devolved upon him

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was the tailoring one.* His personal habits had not been improved by his brief sojourn in the Great City, and his business, in consequence (by his own statement) of the irregularity of his life, gradually melted to nothing in his hands. Early in 1805, his goods were sold off, and barely sufficed to pay his debts. The worthy old couple found refuge with their ever affectionate eldest son, who provided his father with some little occupation (real or nominal) about the printing-office; and thus John himself again quitted his native place, under circumstances which, as I shall show in the sequel, had left a deep and painful trace even upon that volatile mind.

He had, however, some taste, and he at least fancied himself to have some talent for literature;† and the rise of his elder brother, who also had met with no success in his original profession, was before him. He had acquired in London great apparent dexterity in book-keeping and accounts. He was married by this time; and it might naturally be hoped, that with the severe lessons of the past, he would now apply sedulously to any duty that might

* The first time that William Laidlaw saw John Ballantyne, he had come to Selkirk to measure the troopers of the Yeomanry Cavalry, of whom Laidlaw was one, for new breeches. [1839.]

† John Ballantyne, upon the marvellous success of Waverley, wrote and published a novel, called "The Widow's Lodgings." More wretched trash never was.

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be intrusted to him. The concern in the Canongate was a growing one, and James Ballantyne's somewhat indolent habits were already severely tried by its multifarious management. The Company offered John a salary of £200 a-year as clerk; and the destitute ex-*merchant* was too happy to accept the proposal.*

He was a quick, active, intrepid little fellow; and in society so very lively and amusing, so full of fun and merriment, such a thoroughly light-hearted droll, all-over quaintness and humorous mimicry; and, moreover, such a keen and skilful devotee to all manner of field-sports, from fox-hunting to badger-baiting inclusive, that it was no wonder he should have made a favourable impression on Scott, when he appeared in Edinburgh in this destitute plight, and offered to assist James in book-keeping, which the latter never understood, or could bring himself to attend to with regularity. The contrast between the two brothers

* The reader, who compares this account of John Ballantyne's early life with that given in the former edition of this work (Vol. II. p. 196), will observe some alterations that I have made — but they are none of them as to points of the very slightest importance. The sketch of John's career, drawn up by himself, shortly before his death, confirms every word I had said as to anything of substantial consequence — and indeed tells the story more unfavourably for *him* than I did — or do. It was printed in Vol. V. of the first edition, p. 77; and will be reprinted in its proper place, *sub anno* 1821. [1839.]

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was not the least of the amusement; indeed that continued to amuse him to the last. The elder of these is painted to the life in an early letter of Leyden's, which, on the Doctor's death, he, though not (I fancy) without wincing, permitted Scott to print:—"Methinks I see you with your confounded black beard, bull-neck, and upper lip turned up to your nose, while one of your eyebrows is cocked perpendicularly, and the other forms pretty well the base of a right-angled triangle, opening your great gloating eyes, and crying—*But, Leyden!!!*" James was a short, stout, well-made man, and would have been considered a handsome one, but for these grotesque frowns, starts, and twistings of his features, set off by a certain mock majesty of walk and gesture, which he had perhaps contracted from his usual companions, the emperors and tyrants of the stage. His voice in talk was grave and sonorous, and he sung well (theatrically well), in a fine rich bass. John's tone in singing was a sharp treble—in conversation something between a croak and a squeak. Of *his* style of story-telling it is sufficient to say that the late Charles Mathews's "old Scotch lady" was but an imperfect copy of the original, which the great comedian first heard in my presence from his lips.* He was shorter than James, but lean as a

* The reader will find an amusing anecdote of Johnny in the Memoirs of Mathews, by his widow, vol. ii. p. 382. [1839.]

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scarecrow, and he rather hopped than walked: his features, too, were naturally good, and he twisted them about quite as much, but in a very different fashion. The elder brother was a gourmand—the younger liked his bottle and his bowl, as well as, like Johnny Armstrong, "a hawk, a hound, and a fair woman." Scott used to call the one Aldiborontiphoscophornio—the other Rigdumfunnidos. They both entertained him; they both loved and revered him; and I believe would have shed their heart's blood in his service; but they both, as men of affairs, deeply injured him—and above all, the day that brought John into pecuniary connexion with him was the blackest in his calendar. A more reckless, thoughtless, improvident adventurer never rushed into the serious responsibilities of business; but his cleverness, his vivacity, his unaffected zeal, his gay fancy always seeing the light side of every thing, his imperturbable good-humour and buoyant elasticity of spirits, made and kept him such a favourite, that I believe Scott would have as soon have ordered his dog to be hanged, as harboured, in his darkest hour of perplexity, the least thought of discarding "jocund Johnny."

The great bookseller of Edinburgh was a man of calibre infinitely beyond these Ballantynes. Though with a strong dash of the sanguine, without which, indeed, there can be no great projector in any walk

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of life, Archibald Constable was one of the most sagacious persons that ever followed his profession. A brother poet of Scott says to him, a year or two before this time, "Our butteracious friend at the Cross turns out a deep draw-well"; and another eminent literator, still more closely connected with Constable, had already, I believe, christened him "The Crafty." Indeed, his fair and very handsome physiognomy carried a bland astuteness of expression, not to be mistaken by any who could read the plainest of nature's handwriting. He made no pretensions to literature—though he was in fact a tolerable judge of it generally, and particularly well skilled in the department of Scotch antiquities. He distrusted himself, however, in such matters, being conscious that his early education had been very imperfect; and moreover, he wisely considered the business of a critic as quite as much out of his "proper line" as authorship itself. But of that "proper line," and his own qualifications for it, his estimation was ample; and—often as I may have smiled at the lofty serenity of his self-complacence—I confess I now doubt whether he rated himself too highly as a master in the true science of the bookseller. He had, indeed, in his mercantile character, one deep and fatal flaw—for he hated accounts, and systematically refused, during the most vigorous years of his life, to examine or sign a balance-sheet; but for casting a keen eye

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over the remotest indications of popular taste—for anticipating the chances of success and failure in any given variety of adventure—for the planning and invention of his calling—he was not, in his own day at least, surpassed; and among all his myriad of undertakings, I question if any one that really originated with himself, and continued to be superintended by his own care, ever did fail. He was as bold as far-sighted—and his disposition was as liberal as his views were wide. Had he and Scott from the beginning trusted as thoroughly as they understood each other; had there been no third parties to step in, flattering an overweening vanity on the one hand into presumption, and on the other side spurring the enterprise that wanted nothing but a bridle, I have no doubt their joint career might have been one of unbroken prosperity. But the Ballantynes were jealous of the superior mind, bearing, and authority of Constable: and though he too had a liking for them both personally — esteemed James's literary tact, and was far too much of a humourist not to be very fond of the younger brother's company—he could never away with the feeling that they intervened unnecessarily, and left him but the shadow, where he ought to have had the substantial lion's share, of confidence. On his part, again, he was too proud a man to give entire confidence where that was withheld from himself; and more especially, I

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can well believe that a frankness of communication as to the real amount of his capital and general engagements of business, which would have been the reverse of painful to him in habitually confidential intercourse with Scott, was out of the question where Scott's proposals and suggestions were to be met in conference, not with his own manly simplicity, but the buckram pomposity of the one, or the burlesque levity of the other, of his plenipotentiaries.

The disputes in question seem to have begun very shortly after the contract for the Life and Edition of Swift had been completed; and we shall presently see reason to infer that Scott to a certain degree was influenced at the moment by a soreness originating in the recent conduct of Mr Jeffrey's Journal—that great primary source of the wealth and authority of the house of Constable. The then comparatively little-known bookseller of London, who was destined to be ultimately Constable's most formidable rival in more than one department of publishing, has told me, that when he read the article on Marmion, and another on general politics, in the same number of the Edinburgh Review, he said to himself—"Walter Scott has feelings both as a gentleman and a Tory, which these people must now have wounded:—the alliance between him and the whole clique of the Edinburgh Review, its proprietor included, is shaken:"

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and, as far at least as the political part of the affair was concerned, John Murray's sagacity was not at fault. We have seen with what thankful alacrity he accepted a small share in the adventure of Marmion — and with what brilliant success that was crowned; nor is it wonderful that a young bookseller, conscious of ample energies, should now have watched with eagerness the circumstances which seemed not unlikely to place within his own reach a more intimate connexion with the first great living author in whose works he had ever had any direct interest. He forthwith took measures for improving and extending his relations with James Ballantyne, through whom, as he guessed, Scott could best be approached. His tenders of employment for the Canongate press were such, that the apparent head of the firm proposed a conference at Ferrybridge, in Yorkshire; and there Murray, after detailing some of his own literary plans — particularly that already alluded to, of a Novelist's Library — in his turn sounded Ballantyne so far, as to resolve at once on pursuing his journey into Scotland. Ballantyne had said enough to satisfy him that the project of setting up a new publishing house in Edinburgh, in opposition to Constable, was already all but matured; and he, on the instant, proposed himself for its active co-operator in the metropolis. The printer proceeded to open his budget further, mentioning, among other things, that the author of

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Marmion had "both another Scotch poem and a *Scotch novel* on the stocks;" and had, moreover, chalked out the design of an Edinburgh Annual Register, to be conducted in opposition to the politics and criticism of Constable's Review. These tidings might have been enough to make Murray proceed farther northwards; but there was a scheme of his own which had for some time deeply occupied his mind, and the last article of this communication determined him to embrace the opportunity of opening it in person at Ashestiel. He arrived there about the middle of October. The 26th Number of the Edinburgh Review, containing Mr Brougham's celebrated article, entitled, "Don Cevallos, on the usurpation of Spain," had just been published; and one of the first things Scott mentioned in conversation was, that he had so highly resented the tone of that essay, as to give orders that his name might be discontinued on the list of subscribers.* Mr Murray could not have wished better auspices for the matter he had come to open; and, shortly after his depar-

* "When the 26th Number appeared, Mr Scott wrote to Constable in these terms: — 'The Edinburgh Review *had* become such as to render it impossible for me to continue a contributor to it. — *Now*, it is such as I can no longer continue to receive or read it.' The list of the then subscribers exhibits in an indignant dash of Constable's pen opposite Mr Scott's name, the word · · 'STOP!!!'" — *Letter from Mr R. Cadell.*

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ture, Scott writes as follows, to his prime political confidant:—

"*To George Ellis, Esq., Claremont.*

"Ashestiel, Nov. 2d, 1808.

"Dear Ellis,

"We had, equally to our joy and surprise, a flying visit from Heber, about three weeks ago. He staid but three days—but, between old stories and new, we made them very merry in their passage. During his stay, John Murray, the bookseller in Fleet Street, who has more real knowledge of what concerns his business than any of his brethren—at least than any of them that I know—came to canvass a most important plan, of which I am now, in 'dern privacie,' to give you the outline. I had most strongly recommended to our Lord Advocate* to think of some counter-measures against the Edinburgh Review, which, politically speaking, is doing incalculable damage. I do not mean this in a mere party view;—the present ministry are not all that I could wish them—for (Canning excepted) I doubt there is among them too much *self-seeking*, as it was called in Cromwell's time; and what is their

* The Right Hon. John Campbell Colquhoun, husband of Scott's early friend, Mary Anne Erskine.

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misfortune, if not their fault, there is not among them one in the decided situation of paramount authority, both with respect to the others and to the Crown, which is, I think, necessary, at least in difficult times, to produce promptitude, regularity, and efficiency in measures of importance. But their political principles are sound English principles, and, compared to the greedy and inefficient horde which preceded them, they are angels of light and of purity. It is obvious, however, that they want defenders both in and out of doors. Pitt's

> —— 'Love and fear glued many friends to him;
> And now he 's fallen, those tough commixtures melt.' *

Were this only to affect a change of hands, I should expect it with more indifference; but I fear a change of principles is designed. The Edinburgh Review tells you coolly, 'We foresee a speedy revolution in this country as well as Mr Cobbett;' and, to say the truth, by degrading the person of the Sovereign—exalting the power of the French armies, and the wisdom of their counsels—holding forth that peace (which they allow can only be purchased by the humiliating prostration of our honour) is indispensable to the very existence of this country—I think, that for these two years past, they have done their

* Slightly altered from 3*d K. Henry VI Act II. Scene* 6.

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utmost to hasten the accomplishment of their own prophecy. Of this work 9000 copies are printed quarterly, and no genteel family *can* pretend to be without it, because, independent of its politics, it gives the only valuable literary criticism which can be met with. Consider, of the numbers who read this work, how many are there likely to separate the literature from the politics—how many youths are there, upon whose minds the flashy and bold character of the work is likely to make an indelible impression; and think what the consequence is likely to be.

"Now, I think there is balm in Gilead for all this; and that the cure lies in instituting such a Review in London as should be conducted totally independent of bookselling influence, on a plan as liberal as that of the Edinburgh, its literature as well supported, and its principles English and constitutional. Accordingly, I have been given to understand that Mr William Gifford is willing to become the conductor of such a work, and I have written to him, at the Lord Advocate's desire, a very voluminous letter on the subject. Now, should this plan succeed, you must hang your birding-piece on its hooks, take down your old Anti-jacobin armour, and 'remember your swashing blow.' It is not that I think this projected Review ought to be exclusively or principally political—this would, in my opinion,

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absolutely counteract its purpose, which I think should be to offer to those who love their country, and to those whom we would wish to love it, a periodical work of criticism conducted with equal talent, but upon sounder principle than that which has gained so high a station in the world of letters. Is not this very possible? In point of learning, you Englishmen have ten times our scholarship; and as for talent and genius, 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than any of the rivers in Israel?' Have we not yourself and your cousin, the Roses, Malthus, Matthias, Gifford, Heber, and his brother? Can I not procure you a score of blue-caps who would rather write for us than for the Edinburgh Review if they got as much pay by it? 'A good plot, good friends, and full of expectation —an excellent plot, very good friends!'*

"Heber's fear was, lest we should fail in procuring regular steady contributors; but I know so much of the interior discipline of reviewing, as to have no apprehension of that. Provided we are once set a-going, by a few dashing numbers, there would be no fear of enlisting regular contributors; but the amateurs must bestir themselves in the first instance. From Government we should be entitled to expect confidential communication as to points of fact (so far as fit to be made public), in our

* Hotspur—1*st K. Henry IV. Act II. Scene* 3.

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political disquisitions. With this advantage, our good cause and St George to boot, we may at least divide the field with our formidable competitors, who, after all, are much better at cutting than parrying, and whom uninterrupted triumph has as much unfitted for resisting a serious attack, as it has done Buonaparte for the Spanish war. Jeffrey is, to be sure, a man of the most uncommon versatility of talent, but what then?

> 'General Howe is a gallant commander,
> There are others as gallant as he.'

Think of all this, and let me hear from you very soon on the subject. Canning is, I have good reason to know, very anxious about the plan. I mentioned it to Robert Dundas, who was here with his lady for two days on a pilgrimage to Melrose, and he approved highly of it. Though no literary man, he is judicious, *clair-voyant*, and uncommonly sound-headed, like his father, Lord Melville. With the exceptions I have mentioned, the thing continues a secret.

"I am truly happy you think well of the Spanish business: they have begun in a truly manly and rounded manner, and barring internal dissension, are, I think, very likely to make their part good. Buonaparte's army has come to assume such a very motley description as gives good hope of its crumbling down

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on the frost of adversity setting in. The Germans and Italians have deserted him in troops, and I greatly doubt his being able to assemble a very huge force at the foot of the Pyrenees, unless he trusts that the terror of his name will be sufficient to keep Germany in subjugation, and Austria in awe. The finances of your old Russian friends are said to be ruined out and out; such is the account we have from Leith.

"Enough of this talk. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

The readiness with which Mr Ellis entered into the scheme thus introduced to his notice, encouraged Scott to write still more fully; indeed, I might fill half a volume with the correspondence now before me concerning the gradual organization, and ultimately successful establishment of the Quarterly Review. But my only object is to illustrate the liberality and sagacity of Scott's views on such a subject, and the characteristic mixture of strong and playful language in which he developed them; and I conceive that this end will be sufficiently accomplished, by extracting two more letters of this bulky series. Already, as we have seen, before opening the matter even to Ellis, he had been requested to communicate his sentiments to the proposed editor of the work, and he had done so in these terms:—

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" *To William Gifford, Esq., London.*

" Edinburgh, October 25, 1808.

" Sir,

" By a letter from the Lord Advocate of Scotland, in consequence of a communication between his Lordship and Mr Canning on the subject of a new Review to be attempted in London, I have the pleasure to understand that you have consented to become the editor, a point which, in my opinion, goes no small way to ensure success to the undertaking. In offering a few observations upon the details of such a plan, I only obey the commands of our distinguished friends, without having the vanity to hope that I can point out anything which was not likely to have at once occurred to a person of Mr Gifford's literary experience and eminence. I shall, however, beg permission to offer you my sentiments, in the miscellaneous way in which they occur to me. The extensive reputation and circulation of the Edinburgh Review is chiefly owing to two circumstances: First, that it is entirely uninfluenced by the booksellers, who have contrived to make most of the other Reviews merely advertising sheets to puff off their own publications; and, secondly, the very handsome recompense which the editor not only holds

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forth to his regular assistants, but actually forces upon those whose circumstances and rank make it a matter of total indifference to them. The editor, to my knowledge, makes a point of every contributor receiving this *bonus*, saying that Czar Peter, when working in the trenches, received pay as a common soldier. This general rule removes all scruples of delicacy, and fixes in his service a number of persons who might otherwise have felt shy in taking the price of their labours, and even the more so because it was an object of convenience to them. There are many young men of talent and enterprise who are extremely glad of a handsome apology to work for fifteen or twenty guineas, although they would not willingly be considered as hired reviewers. From this I deduce two points of doctrine: first, that the work must be considered as independent of all bookselling influence; secondly, that the labours of the contributors must be regularly and handsomely recompensed, and that it must be a rule that each one shall accept of the price of his labour. John Murray of Fleet Street, a young bookseller of capital and enterprise, and with more good sense and propriety of sentiment than fall to the share of most of the trade, made me a visit at Ashestiel a few weeks ago, and as I found he had had some communication with you upon the subject, I did not hesitate to communi-

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cate my sentiments to him on these and some other points of the plan, and I thought his ideas were most liberal and satisfactory.

" The office of the editor is of such importance, that had you not been pleased to undertake it, I fear the plan would have fallen wholly to the ground. The full power of control must, of course, be vested in the editor for selecting, curtailing, and correcting the contributions to the Review. But this is not all; for, as he is the person immediately responsible to the bookseller that the work (amounting to a certain number of pages, more or less) shall be before the public at a certain time, it will be the editor's duty to consider in due time the articles of which each number ought to consist, and to take measures for procuring them from the persons best qualified to write upon such and such subjects. But this is sometimes so troublesome, that I foresee with pleasure you will be soon obliged to abandon your resolution of writing nothing yourself. At the same time, if you will accept of my services as a sort of jackal or lion's provider, I will do all in my power to assist in this troublesome department of editorial duty. But there is still something behind, and that of the last consequence. One great resource to which the Edinburgh editor turns himself, and by which he gives popularity even to the duller articles of his Review, is accepting contributions from per-

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sons of inferior powers of writing, provided they understand the books to which the criticisms relate; and as such are often of stupifying mediocrity, he renders them palatable by throwing in a handful of spice—namely, any lively paragraph or entertaining illustration that occurs to him in reading them over. By this sort of veneering, he converts, without loss of time, or hindrance of business, articles which, in their original state, might hang in the market, into such goods as are not likely to disgrace those among which they are placed. This seems to be a point in which an editor's assistance is of the last consequence, for those who possess the knowledge necessary to review books of research or abstruse disquisition, are very often unable to put the criticism into a readable, much more a pleasant and captivating form; and as their science cannot be attained 'for the nonce,' the only remedy is to supply their deficiencies, and give their lucubrations a more popular turn.

"There is one opportunity possessed by you in a particular degree—that of access to the best sources of political information. It would not, certainly, be advisable that the work should assume, especially at the outset, a professed political character. On the contrary, the articles on science and miscellaneous literature ought to be of such a quality as might fairly challenge competition with the best of our contemporaries. But as the real reason of instituting

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the publication is the disgusting and deleterious doctrine with which the most popular of our Reviews disgraces its pages, it is essential to consider how this warfare should be managed. On this ground, I hope it is not too much to expect from those who have the power of assisting us, that they should on topics of great national interest furnish the reviewers, through the medium of their editor, with accurate views of points of fact, so far as they are fit to be made public. This is the most delicate, and yet most essential part of our scheme. On the one hand, it is certainly not to be understood that we are to be held down to advocate upon all occasions the cause of administration. Such a dereliction of independence would render us entirely useless for the purpose we mean to serve. On the other hand, nothing will render the work more interesting than the public learning, not from any vaunt of ours, but from their own observation, that we have access to early and accurate information in point of fact. The Edinburgh Review has profited much by the pains which the Opposition party have taken to possess the writers of all the information they could give them on public matters. Let me repeat that you, my dear sir, from enjoying the confidence of Mr Canning and other persons in power, may easily obtain the confidential information necessary to give credit to the work, and communicate it to such as

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you may think proper to employ in laying it before the public.

"Concerning the mode and time of publication, I think you will be of opinion that monthly, in the present dearth of good subjects of Review, would be too often, and that a quarterly publication would both give you less trouble, and be amply sufficient for discussing all that is likely to be worth discussion. The name to be assumed is of some consequence, though any one of little pretension will do. We might, for example, revive the 'English Review,' which was the name of Gilbert Stuart's.* Regular correspondents ought to be sought after; but I should be little afraid of finding such, were the reputation of the Review once decidedly established by three or four numbers of the very first order. As it would be essential to come on the public by surprise, that no unreasonable expectation or artificial misrepresentation might prejudice its success, the authors employed in the first number ought to be few and of the first rate. The choosing of subjects would also be a matter of anxious consideration: for example, a good and distinct essay on Spanish affairs

* "The English Review" was started in January 1783, under the auspices of the elder Mr John Murray of Fleet Street. It had Dr G. Stuart for Editor, and ranked among its contributors Whittaker the historian of Manchester, Dr. William Thomson, &c. &c.

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would be sufficient to give a character to the work. The lucubrations of the Edinburgh Review, on that subject, have done the work great injury with the public; and I am convinced, that of the many thousands of copies now distributed of each Number, the quantity might be reduced one-half at least, by any work appearing, which, with the same literary talent and independent character, should speak a political language more familiar to the British ear than that of subjugation to France. At the same time, as I before hinted, it will be necessary to maintain the respect of the public by impartial disquisition; and I would not have it said, as may usually be predicated of other Reviews, that the sentiments of the critic were less determined by the value of the work than by the purpose it was written to serve. If a weak brother will unadvisedly put forth his hand to support even the ark of the constitution, I would expose his arguments, though I might approve of his intention and of his conclusions. I should think an open and express declaration of political tenets, or of opposition to works of a contrary tendency, ought for the same reason to be avoided. I think, from the little observation I have made, that the Whigs suffer most deeply from cool sarcastic reasoning and occasional ridicule. Having long had a sort of command of the press, from the neglect of all literary assistance on the part of those who thought their

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good cause should fight its own battle, they are apt to feel with great acuteness any assault in that quarter; and having been long accustomed to push, have in some degree lost the power to parry. It will not, therefore, be long before they make some violent retort, and I should not be surprised if it were to come through the Edinburgh Review. We might then come into close combat with a much better grace than if we had thrown down a formal defiance. I am, therefore, for going into a state of hostility without any formal declaration of war. Let our forces for a number or two consist of volunteers and amateurs, and when we have acquired some reputation, we shall soon levy and discipline forces of the line.

"After all, the matter is become very serious,—eight or nine thousand copies of the Edinburgh Review are regularly distributed, merely because there is no other respectable and independent publication of the kind. In this city, where there is not one Whig out of twenty men who read the work, many hundreds are sold; and how long the generality of readers will continue to dislike politics, so artfully mingled with information and amusement, is worthy of deep consideration. But it is not yet too late to stand in the breach; the first number ought, if possible, to be out in January, and if it can burst among them like a bomb, without previous

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notice, the effect will be more striking. Of those who might be intrusted in the first instance, you are a much better judge than I am. I think I can command the assistance of a friend or two here, particularly William Erskine, the Lord Advocate's brother-in-law and my most intimate friend. In London you have Malthus, George Ellis, the Roses, *cum pluribus aliis*. Richard Heber was with me when Murray came to my farm, and knowing his zeal for the good cause, I let him into our counsels. In Mr Frere we have the hopes of a potent ally. The Rev. Reginald Heber would be an excellent coadjutor, and when I come to town I will sound Matthias. As strict secrecy would of course be observed, the diffidence of many might be overcome; —for scholars you can be at no loss while Oxford stands where it did,—and I think there will be no deficiency in the scientific articles.

"Once more I have to apologize for intruding on you this hasty, and therefore long, and probably confused letter; I trust your goodness will excuse my expressing any apology for submitting to your better judgment my sentiments on a plan of such consequence. I expect to be called to London early in the winter, perhaps next month. If you see Murray, as I suppose you will, I presume you will communicate to him such of my sentiments as have the good fortune to coincide with yours. Among

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the works in the first Number, Fox's history, Grattan's speeches, a notable subject for a quizzing article, and any tract or pamphlet that will give an opportunity to treat of the Spanish affairs, would be desirable subjects of criticism. I am, with great respect, Sir, your most obedient servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

On the 18th of November, Scott enclosed to Mr Ellis "the rough scroll" (that now transcribed) of his letter to Mr Gifford;—"this being," he says, "one of the very few epistles of which I thought it will be as well to retain a copy." He then proceeds as follows:—"Supposing you to have read said scroll, you must know further, that it has been received in a most favourable manner by Mr Gifford, who approves of its contents in all respects, and that Mr Canning has looked it over, and promised such aid as is therein required. I therefore wish you to be apprised fully of what could hardly be made the subject of writing, unless in all the confidence of friendship. Let me touch a string of much delicacy —the political character of the Review. It appears to me that this should be of a liberal and enlarged nature, resting upon principles—indulgent and conciliatory as far as possible upon mere party questions —but stern in detecting and exposing all attempts to sap our constitutional fabric. Religion is another

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slippery station; here also I would endeavour to be as impartial as the subject will admit of. This character of impartiality, as well as the maintenance of a high reputation in literature, is of as great consequence to such of our friends as are in the Ministry, as our more direct efforts in their favour; for these will only be successful in proportion to the influence we shall acquire by an extensive circulation; to procure which, the former qualities will be essentially necessary. Now, *entre nous*, will not our editor be occasionally a little warm and pepperish?—essential qualities in themselves, but which should not quite constitute the leading character of such a publication. This is worthy of a *memento*.

"As our start is of such immense consequence, don't you think Mr Canning, though unquestionably our Atlas, might for a day find a Hercules on whom to devolve the burthen of the globe, while he writes us a review? I know what an audacious request this is; but suppose he should, as great statesmen sometimes do, take a political fit of the gout, and absent himself from a large ministerial dinner, which might give it him in good earnest,—dine at three on a chicken and pint of wine,—and lay the foundation at least of one good article? Let us but once get afloat, and our labour is not worth talking of; but, till then, all hands must work hard.

"Is it necessary to say that I agree entirely with

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you in the mode of treating even delinquents? The truth is, there is policy, as well as morality, in keeping our swords clear as well as sharp, and not forgetting the gentlemen in the critics. The public appetite is soon gorged with any particular style. The common Reviews, before the appearance of the Edinburgh, had become extremely mawkish; and, unless when prompted by the malice of the bookseller or reviewer, gave a dawdling, maudlin sort of applause to everything that reached even mediocrity. The Edinburgh folks squeezed into their sauce plenty of acid, and were popular from novelty as well as from merit. The minor Reviews and other periodical publications, have *outrèd* the matter still farther, and given us all abuse, and no talent. But by the time the language of vituperative criticism becomes general — (which is now pretty nearly the case) — it affects the tympanum of the public ear no more than *rogue* or *rascal* from the cage of a parrot, or *blood-and-wounds* from a horse-barrack. This, therefore, we have to trust to, that decent, lively, and reflecting criticism, teaching men not to abuse books only, but to read and to judge them, will have the effect of novelty upon a public wearied with universal efforts at blackguard and indiscriminating satire. I have a long and very sensible letter from John Murray the bookseller, in which he touches upon this point very neatly. By the by,

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little Weber may be very useful upon antiquarian subjects, in the way of collecting information and making remarks; only, you or I must re-write his lucubrations. I use him often as a pair of eyes in consulting books and collating, and as a pair of hands in making extracts. Constable, the great Edinburgh editor, has offended me excessively by tyrannizing over this poor Teutcher, and being rather rude when I interfered. It is a chance but I may teach him that he should not kick down the scaffolding before his house is quite built. Another bomb is about to break on him besides the Review. This is an Edinburgh Annual Register, to be conducted under the auspices of James Ballantyne, who is himself no despicable composer, and has secured excellent assistance. I cannot help him, of course, very far, but I will certainly lend him a lift as an adviser. I want all my friends to befriend this work, and will send you a *prospectus* when it is published. It will be *valde* anti-Foxite. This is a secret for the present.

"For heaven's sake do not fail to hold a meeting as soon as you can. Gifford will be admirable at service, but will require, or I mistake him much, both a spur and a bridle—a spur on account of habits of literary indolence induced by weak health—and a bridle because, having renounced in some degree general society, he cannot be supposed to have the habitual and instinctive feeling enabling.

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him to judge at once and decidedly on the mode of letting his shafts fly down the breeze of popular opinion. But he has worth, wit, learning, and extensive information; is the friend of our friends in power, and can easily correspond with them; is in no danger of having private quarrels fixed on him for public criticism; nor very likely to be embarrassed by being thrown into action in public life alongside of the very people he has reviewed, and probably offended. All this is of the last importance to the discharge of his arduous duty. It would be cruel to add a word to this merciless epistle, excepting love to Mrs Ellis and all friends. Leyden, by the by, is triumphant at Calcutta — a *Judge*, of all things! — and making money! He has flourished like a green bay tree under the auspices of Lord Minto, his countryman. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

Among others whom Scott endeavoured to enlist in the service of the new Review was his brother Thomas, who on the breaking up of his affairs in Edinburgh, had retired to the Isle of Man, and who shortly afterwards obtained the office in which he died, that of paymaster to the 70th regiment. The poet had a high opinion of his brother's literary talents, and thought that his knowledge of our ancient dramatists, and his vein of comic narration,

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might render him a very useful recruit. He thus communicates his views to Thomas Scott, on the 19th November, and, as might be expected, the communication is fuller and franker than any other on the subject: —

"*To Thomas Scott, Esq., Douglas, Isle of Man.*

"Dear Tom,

"Owing to certain pressing business, I have not yet had time to complete my collection of Shadwell* for you, though it is now nearly ready. — I wish you to have all the originals to collate with the edition in 8vo. But I have a more pressing employment for your pen, and to which I think it particularly suited. You are to be informed, but under the seal of the strictest secrecy, that a plot has been long hatching by the gentlemen who were active in the Anti-jacobin paper, to countermine the Edinburgh Review, by establishing one which should display similar talent and independence, with a better strain of politics. The management of this work

* Mr T. Scott had meditated an edition of Shadwell's plays,— which, by the way, his brother considered as by no means meriting the utter neglect into which they have fallen, chiefly in consequence of Dryden's satire.

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was much pressed upon me;* but though great prospects of emolument were held out, I declined so arduous a task, and it has devolved upon Mr Gifford, author of the Baviad, with whose wit and learning you are well acquainted. He made it a stipulation, however, that I should give all the assistance in my power, especially at the commencement; to which I am, for many reasons, nothing loth. Now, as I know no one who possesses more power of humour or perception of the ridiculous than yourself, I think your leisure hours might be most pleasantly passed in this way. Novels, light poetry, and quizzical books of all kinds, might be sent you by the packet; you glide back your reviews in the same way, and touch, upon the publication of the number (quarterly), ten guineas per printed sheet of sixteen pages. If you are shy of communicating directly with Gifford, you may, for some time at least, send your communications through me, and I will revise them. We want the matter to be a *profound secret* till the first number is out. If you agree to try your skill I will send you a novel or two. You must understand, as Gadshill tells the Chamberlain, that you are to be leagued with 'Trojans that thou dreamest not of, the which for sport

* This circumstance was not revealed to Mr Murray. I presume, therefore, the invitation to Scott must have proceeded from Mr Canning.

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sake are content to do the profession some grace;'* and thus far I assure you, that if by paying attention to your style and subject you can distinguish yourself creditably, it may prove a means of finding you powerful friends were anything opening in your island. Constable, or rather that Bear his partner, has behaved to me of late not very civilly, and I owe Jeffrey a flap with a fox-tail on account of his review of Marmion, and thus doth 'the whirligig of time bring about my revenges.'† The late articles on Spain have given general disgust, and many have given up the Edinburgh Review on account of them.

"My mother holds out very well, and talks of writing by this packet. Her cask of herrings, as well as ours, red and white, have arrived safe, and prove most excellent. We have been both dining and supping upon them with great gusto, and are much obliged by your kindness in remembering us. Yours affectionately, W. S."

I suspect, notwithstanding the opinion to the contrary expressed in the following extract, that the preparations for the new journal did not long escape the notice of either the editor or the publishers of the Edinburgh Review. On receiving the celebrated

* 1*st K. Henry IV. Act II. Scene* 1.

† *Twelfth Night, Act V. Scene* 1

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Declaration of Westminster on the subject of the Spanish war, which bears date the 15th December 1808, Scott says to Ellis—"I cannot help writing a few lines to congratulate you on the royal declaration. I suspect by this time the author is at Claremont,* for, if I mistake not egregiously, this spirited composition, as we say in Scotland, fathers itself in the manliness of its style. It has appeared, too, at a most fortunate time, when neither friend nor foe can impute it to temporary motives. Tell Mr Canning that the old women of Scotland will defend the country with their distaffs, rather than that troops enough be not sent to make good so noble a pledge. Were the thousands that have mouldered away in petty conquests or Liliputian expeditions united to those we now have in that country, what a band would Moore have under him! . . . . . Jeffrey has offered terms of pacification, engaging that no party politics should again appear in his Review. I told him I thought it was now too late, and reminded him that I had often pointed out to him the consequences of letting his work become a party tool. He said 'he did not care for the consequences—there

* Scott's friend had mentioned that his cousin (now Lord Seaford) expected a visit from Mr Canning, at Claremont, in Surrey; which beautiful seat continued in the possession of the Ellis family, until it was purchased by the crown, on the marriage of the Princess Charlotte of Wales, in 1816.

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were but four men he feared as opponents.'—'Who were these?'—'Yourself for one.'—'Certainly you pay me a great compliment; depend upon it I will endeavour to deserve it.'—'Why, you would not join against me?'—'Yes I would, if I saw a proper opportunity: not against you personally, but against your politics.'—'You are privileged to be violent.'—'I don't ask any privilege for undue violence. But who are your other foemen?'—'George Ellis and Southey.' The fourth he did not name. All this was in great good-humour; and next day I had a very affecting note from him, in answer to an invitation to dinner. He has no suspicion of the Review whatever; but I thought I could not handsomely suffer him to infer that I would be influenced by those private feelings respecting *him*, which, on more than one occasion, he has laid aside when I was personally concerned."

As to Messrs Constable and Co., it is not to be supposed that the rumours of the rival journal would tend to soothe those disagreeable feelings between them and Scott, of which I can trace the existence several months beyond the date of Mr Murray's arrival at Ashestiel. Something seems to have occurred before the end of 1808 which induced Scott to suspect, that among other sources of uneasiness had been a repentant grudge in the minds of those booksellers as to their bargain about the new edition

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of Swift; and on the 2d of January 1809, I find him requesting, that if, on reflection, they thought they had hastily committed themselves, the deed might be forthwith cancelled. On the 11th of the same month, Messrs. Constable reply as follows:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Sir,

"We are anxious to assure you that we feel no dissatisfaction at any part of our bargain about Swift. Viewing it as a safe and respectable speculation, we should be very sorry to agree to your relinquishing the undertaking, and indeed rely with confidence on its proceeding as originally arranged. We regret that you have not been more willing to overlook the unguarded expression of our Mr Hunter about which you complain. We are very much concerned that any circumstance should have occurred that should thus interrupt our friendly intercourse; but as we are not willing to believe that we have done anything which should prevent our being again friends, we may at least be permitted to express a hope that matters may hereafter be restored to their old footing between us, when the misrepresentations of interested persons may cease to be remembered. At any rate, you will always find us, what we trust we have ever been, Sir, your faithful servants,

A. CONSTABLE & Co."

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Scott answers:

"*To Messrs Constable & Co.*

"Edinburgh, 12th January 1809.

"Gentlemen,

"To resume, for the last time, the disagreeable subject of our difference, I must remind you of what I told Mr Constable personally, that no *single unguarded expression*, much less the misrepresentation of any person whatever, would have influenced me to quarrel with any of my friends. But if Mr Hunter will take the trouble to recollect the general opinion he has expressed of my undertakings, and of my ability to execute them, upon many occasions during the last five months, and his whole conduct in the bargain about Swift, I think he ought to be the last to wish his interest compromised on my account. I am only happy the breach has taken place before there was any real loss to complain of, for although I have had my share of popularity, I cannot expect it to be more lasting than that of those who have lost it after deserving it much better.

"In the present circumstances, I have only a parting favour to request of your house, which is, that the portrait for which I sat to Raeburn shall be considered as done at my debit, and for myself. It shall be of course forthcoming for the fulfilment of

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any engagement you may have made about engraving, if such exists. Sadler will now be soon out, when we will have a settlement of our accounts I am, Gentlemen, your obedient servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

Mr Constable declined, in very handsome terms, to give up the picture. But for the present the breach was complete. Among other negotiations which Scott had patronised twelve months before, was one concerning the publication of Miss Seward's Poems. On the 19th of March 1809, he writes as follows to that lady:—"Constable, like many other folks who learn to undervalue the means by which they have risen, has behaved, or rather suffered his partner to behave, very uncivilly towards me. But they may both live to know that they should not have kicked down the ladder till they were sure of their footing. The very last time I spoke to him on business was about your poems, which he promised faithfully to write about. I understood him to decline your terms, in which he acted wrong; but I had neither influence to change his opinion, nor inclination to interfere with his resolution. He is a very enterprising, and, I believe, a thoroughly honest man, but his vanity in some cases overpowers his discretion."

One word as to the harsh language in which Con-

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stable's then partner is mentioned in several of the preceding letters. This Mr. Hunter was, I am told by friends of mine who knew him well, a man of considerable intelligence and accomplishments, to whose personal connexions and weight in society the house of Constable and Co. owed a great accession of business and influence. He was, however, a very keen politician; regarded Scott's Toryism with a fixed bitterness; and, moreover, could never conceal his impression that Scott ought to have embarked in no other literary undertakings whatever, until he had completed his edition of Swift. It is not wonderful that, not having been bred regularly to the book-selling business, he should have somewhat misapprehended the obligation which Scott had incurred when the bargain for that work was made; and his feeling of his own station and consequence was no doubt such as to give his style of conversation, on doubtful questions of business, a tone for which Scott had not been prepared by his previous intercourse with Mr Constable. The defection of the poet was, however, at once regretted and resented by both these partners; and Constable, I am told, often vented his wrath in figures as lofty as Scott's own. "Ay," he would say, stamping on the ground with a savage smile, "Ay, there is such a thing as rearing the oak until it can support itself."

All this leads us to the second stage, one still more

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unwise and unfortunate than the first, in the history of Scott's commercial connexion with the Ballantynes. The scheme of starting a new bookselling house in Edinburgh, begun in the shortsighted heat of pique, had now been matured; — I cannot add, either with composed observation or rational forecast — for it was ultimately settled that the ostensible and chief managing partner should be a person without capital, and neither by training nor by temper in the smallest degree qualified for such a situation; more especially where the field was to be taken against long experience, consummate skill, and resources which, if not so large as all the world supposed them, were still in comparison vast, and admirably organized. The rash resolution was, however, carried into effect, and a deed, deposited, for secrecy's sake, in the hands of Scott, laid the foundation of the firm of "John Ballantyne and Co., booksellers, Edinburgh." Scott appears to have supplied all the capital, at any rate his own *one-half* share, and *one-fourth*, the portion of James, who, not having any funds to spare, must have become indebted to some one for it. It does not appear from what source John acquired his, the remaining *fourth;* but *Rigdumfunnidos* was thus installed in Hanover Street as the avowed rival of "The Crafty."

The existing bond of copartnership is dated in July 1809; but I suspect this had been a revised

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edition. It is certain that the new house were openly mustering their forces some weeks before Scott desired to withdraw his Swift from the hands of the old one in January. This appears from several of the letters that passed between him and Ellis while Gifford was arranging the materials for the first number of the Quarterly Review, and also between him and his friend Southey, to whom, perhaps, more than any other single writer, that journal owed its ultimate success.

To Ellis, for example, he says, on the 13th of December 1808 — "Now let me call your earnest attention to another literary undertaking, which is, in fact, a subsidiary branch of the same grand plan. I transmit the *prospectus* of an Edinburgh Annual Register. I have many reasons for favouring this work as much as I possibly can. In the first place, there is nothing even barely tolerable of this nature, though so obviously necessary to future history. Secondly, Constable was on the point of arranging one on the footing of the Edinburgh Review, and subsidiary thereunto, — a plan which has been totally disconcerted by our occupying the vantage-ground. Thirdly, this work will be very well managed. The two Mackenzies,* William Erskine, *cum plurimis aliis*, are engaged in the literary department, and that of science is conducted by Professor Leslie, a great

* The Man of Feeling, and Colin Mackenzie of Portmore.

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philosopher, and as abominable an animal as I ever saw. He writes, however, with great eloquence, and is an enthusiast in mathematical, chemical, and mineralogical pursuits. I hope to draw upon you in this matter, particularly in the historical department, to which your critical labours will naturally turn your attention. You will ask what I propose to do myself. In fact, though something will be expected I cannot propose to be very active unless the Swift is abandoned, of which I think there is some prospect, as I have reason to complain of very indifferent usage, not indeed from Constable, who is reduced to utter despair by the circumstance, but from the stupid impertinence of his partner, a sort of Whig run mad. I have some reason to believe that Ballantyne, whose stock is now immensely increased, and who is likely to enlarge it by marriage, will commence publisher. Constable threatened him with withdrawing his business from him as a printer on account of his being a Constitutionalist. He will probably by this false step establish a formidable rival in his own line of publishing, which will be most just retribution. I intend to fortify Ballantyne by promising him my continued friendship, which I hope may be of material service to him. He is much liked by the literary people here; has a liberal spirit, and understanding business very completely, with a good general idea of literature, I think he stands fair for success.

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"But, Oh! Ellis, these cursed, double cursed news, have sunk my spirits so much, that I am almost at disbelieving a Providence. God forgive me! But I think some evil demon has been permitted, in the shape of this tyrannical monster whom God has sent on the nations visited in his anger. I am confident he is proof against lead and steel, and have only hopes that he may be shot with a silver bullet,* or drowned in the torrents of blood which he delights to shed. Oh for True Thomas and Lord Soulis's cauldron!† Adieu, my dear Ellis. God bless you! — I have been these three days writing this by snatches."

The "cursed news" here alluded to were those of Napoleon's advance by Somosierra, after the dispersion of the armies of Blake and Castaños. On the 23d of the same month, when the Treason of Morla and the fall of Madrid were known in Edinburgh, he thus resumes: — (Probably while he wrote, some

* See note, "Proof against shot given by Satan." — *Waverley Novels*, vol. x. p. 40.

† "On a circle of stones they placed the pot,
On a circle of stones but barely nine;
They heated it red and fiery hot,
Till the burnish'd brass did glimmer and shine.
They roll'd him up in a sheet of lead,
A sheet of lead for a funeral pall;
They plunged him in the cauldron red,
And melted him, lead, and bones and all."

See the Ballad of *Lord Soulis*, and notes, *Border Minstrelsy*. vol. iv. pp. 235–266.

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cause with which he was not concerned was occupying the Court of Session:)—

"Dear Ellis,—I have nothing better to do but to vent my groans. I cannot but feel exceedingly low. I distrust what we call thoroughbred soldiers terribly, when anything like the formation of extensive plans, of the daring and critical nature which seems necessary for the emancipation of Spain, is required from them. Our army is a poor school for genius—for the qualities which naturally and deservedly attract the applause of our generals, are necessarily exercised upon a small scale. I would to God Wellesley were now at the head of the English in Spain. His late examination shows his acute and decisive talents for command;* and although I believe in my conscience, that when he found himself superseded, he suffered the pigs to run through the business, when he might in some measure have prevented them—

'Yet give the haughty devil his due,
Though bold his quarterings, they are true.'

* This refers to Sir Arthur Wellesley's evidence before the Court of Inquiry into the circumstances which led to the Convention (miscalled) of Cintra. For the best answer to the then popular suspicion, which Scott seems to have partaken, as to the conduct of Sir Arthur when superseded in the moment of victory at Vimiero, I refer to the contemporary despatches lately published in Colonel Gurwood's invaluable compilation.

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Such a man, with an army of 40,000 or 50,000 British, with the remains of the Gallician army, and the additional forces which every village would furnish in case of success, might possess himself of Burgos, open a communication with Arragon, and even Navarre, and place Buonaparte in the precarious situation of a general with 100,000 enemies between him and his supplies; — for I presume neither Castaños nor Palafox are so broken as to be altogether disembodied. But a general who is always looking over his shoulder, and more intent on saving his own army than on doing the service on which he is sent, will hardly, I fear, be found capable of forming or executing a plan which its very daring character might render successful. What would we think of an admiral who should bring back his fleet and tell us old Keppel's story of a lee-shore, and the risk of his Majesty's vessels? Our sailors have learned that his Majesty's ships were built to be stranded, or burnt, or sunk, or at least to encounter the risk of these contingencies, when his service requires it; and I heartily wish our generals would learn to play for the gammon, and not to sit down contented with a mere saving game. What, however, can we say of Moore, or how judge of his actions, since the Supreme Junta have shown themselves so miserably incapable of the arduous exertions expected from them? Yet, like

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Pistol, they spoke bold words at the bridge too,* and I admired their firmness in declaring O'Farrel, and the rest of the Frenchified Spaniards, traitors. But they may have Roman pride, and want Roman talent to support it; and in short, unless God Almighty should raise among them one of those extraordinary geniuses who seem to be created for the emergencies of an oppressed people, I confess I still incline to despondence. If Canning could send a portion of his own spirit with the generals he sends forth, my hope would be high indeed. The proclamation was truly gallant.

"As to the Annual Register, I do agree that the Prospectus is in too stately a tone—yet I question if a purer piece of composition would have attracted the necessary attention. We must sound a trumpet before we open a show. You will say we have added a tambourin; but the mob will the more readily stop and gaze; nor would their ears be so much struck by a sonata from Viotti. Do you know the Review begins to get wind here? An Edinburgh bookseller asked me to recommend him for the sale here, and said he heard it confidentially from London.—Ever yours, W. S."

I may also introduce here a letter of about the

* *K. Henry V. Act IV. Scene 4.*

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same date, and referring chiefly to the same subjects, addressed by Scott to his friend, Mr Charles Sharpe,* then at Oxford. The allusion at the beginning is to a drawing of Queen Elizabeth, as seen "dancing high and disposedly," in her private chamber, by the Scotch ambassador, Sir James Melville, whose description of the exhibition is one of the most amusing things in his Memoirs. This production of Mr Sharpe's pencil, and the delight with which Scott used to expatiate on its merits, must be well remembered by every one that ever visited the poet at Abbotsford.—Some of the names mentioned in this letter as counted on by the projectors of the Quarterly Review will, no doubt, amuse the reader.

"*To Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, Esq., Christ Church, Oxford.*

"Edinburgh, 30th December 1808.

"My Dear Sharpe,

"The inimitable virago came safe, and was welcomed by the inextinguishable laughter of all who looked upon her caprioles. I was unfortunately out

* Scott's acquaintance with Mr Sharpe began when the latter was very young. He supplied Scott, when compiling the Minstrelsy, with the ballad of the "Tower of Repentance," &c. See vol. iv. pp. 307–393

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of town for a few days, which prevented me from acknowledging instantly what gave me so much pleasure, both on account of its intrinsic value, and as a mark of your kind remembrance. You have, I assure you, been upmost in my thoughts for some time past, as I have a serious design on your literary talents, which I am very anxious to engage in one or both of the two following schemes. *Imprimis*, it has been long the decided resolution of Mr Canning and some of his literary friends, particularly Geo. Ellis, Malthus, Frere, W. Rose, &c., that something of an independent Review ought to be started in London. This plan is now on the point of being executed, after much consultation. I have strongly advised that politics be avoided, unless in cases of great national import, and that their tone be then moderate and manly; but the general tone of the publication is to be literary. William Gifford is editor, and I have promised to endeavour to recruit for him a few spirited young men able and willing to assist in such an undertaking. I confess you were chiefly in my thoughts when I made this promise; but it is a subject which for a thousand reasons I would rather have talked over than written about—among others more prominent I may reckon my great abhorrence of pen and ink, for writing has been so long a matter of duty with me, that it is become as utterly abominable to me as matters of duty usually

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are. Let me entreat you, therefore, to lay hold of Macneill,* or any other new book you like, and give us a good hacking review of it. I retain so much the old habit of a barrister, that I cannot help adding, the fee is ten guineas a-sheet, which may serve to buy an odd book now and then—as good play for nothing, you know, as work for nothing; but besides this, your exertions in this cause, if you shall choose to make any, will make you more intimately acquainted with a very pleasant literary coterie than introductions of a more formal kind; and if you happen to know George Ellis already, you must, I am sure, be pleased to take any trouble likely to produce an intimacy between you. The Hebers are also engaged, *item* Rogers, Southey, Moore (Anacreon), and others whose reputations Jeffrey has murdered, and who are rising to cry wo upon him, like the ghosts in King Richard; for your acute and perspicacious judgment must ere this have led you to suspect that this same new Review, which by the way is to be called 'the Quarterly,' is intended as a rival to the Edinburgh; and if it contains criticism not very inferior in point of talent, with the same independence on booksellers' influence (which has ruined all the English Reviews), I do not see why it should not divide with it the public favour. Observe

* "The Pastoral, or Lyric Muse of Scotland; in three Cantos," &c, by Hector Macneill, appeared in Dec. 1808.

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carefully, this plan is altogether distinct from one which has been proposed by the veteran Cumberland, to which is annexed the extraordinary proposal that each contributor shall place his name before his article, a stipulation which must prove fatal to the undertaking. If I did not think this likely to be a very well managed business, I would not recommend it to your consideration; but you see I am engaged with no 'foot land-rakers, no long-staff sixpenny strikers, but with nobility and tranquillity, burgomasters, and great oneyers,' and so forth.*

"The other plan refers to the enclosed prospectus, and has long been a favourite scheme of mine, of William Erskine's, and some of my other cronies here. Mr Ballantyne, the editor, only undertakes for the inferior departments of the work, and for keeping the whole matter in train. We are most anxious to have respectable contributors, and the smallest donation in any department, poetry, antiquities, &c. &c., will be most thankfully accepted and registered. But the historical department is that in which I would chiefly wish to see you engaged. A lively luminous picture of the events of the last momentous year, is a task for the pen of a man of genius; as for materials, I could procure you access to many of a valuable kind. The appointments of our historian are £300

* Gadshill — *1st K. Henry IV. Act II. Scene* 1.

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a-year—no deaf nuts. Another person* has been proposed, and written to, but I cannot any longer delay submitting the thing to your consideration. Of course, you are to rely on every assistance that can be afforded by your humble comdumble, as Swift says. I hope the great man will give us his answer shortly—and if his be negative, pray let yours be positive. Our politics we would wish to be constitutional, but not party. You see, my good friend, what it is to show your good parts before unquestionable judges.

"I am forced to conclude abruptly. Thine entirely, W. SCOTT."

Mr Morritt was by this time beginning to correspond with the poet pretty frequently. The first of their letters, however, that serves to throw light on Scott's personal proceedings, is the following:—

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park, Yorkshire.*

"Edinburgh, 14th January 1809.

"My Dear Sir,

"For a long while I thought my summons to London would have been immediate, and that I

* Mr Southey—who finally undertook the task proposed to him.

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should have had the pleasure to wait upon you at Rokeby Park in my way to town. But, after due consideration, the commissioners on our Scottish reform of judicial proceedings resolved to begin their sittings at Edinburgh, and have been in full activity ever since last St. Andrew's day. You are not ignorant that in business of this nature, very much of the detail, and of preparing the materials for the various meetings, necessarily devolves upon the clerk, and I cannot say but that my time has been fully occupied.

"Meanwhile, however, I have been concocting, at the instigation of various loyal and well-disposed persons, a grand scheme of opposition to the proud critics of Edinburgh. It is now matured in all its branches, and consists of the following divisions. A new review in London, to be called the Quarterly, William Gifford to be the editor; George Ellis, Rose, Mr Canning if possible, Frere, and all the ancient Anti-Jacobins, to be concerned. The first number is now in hand, and the allies, I hope and trust, securely united to each other. I have promised to get them such assistance as I can, and most happy should I be to prevail upon you to put your hand to the ark. You can so easily run off an article either of learning or of fun, that it would be inexcusable not to afford us your assistance. Then, sir, to turn the flank of Messrs. Constable and Co.,

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and to avenge myself of certain impertinences which, in the vehemence of their Whiggery, they have dared to indulge in towards me, I have prepared to start against them at Whitsunday first the celebrated printer, Ballantyne (who had the honour of meeting you at Ashestiel), in the shape of an Edinburgh publisher, with a long purse* and a sound political creed, not to mention an alliance offensive and defensive with young John Murray of Fleet Street, the most enlightened and active of the London trade. By this means I hope to counterbalance the predominating influence of Constable and Co., who at present have it in their power and inclination to forward or suppress any book as they approve or dislike its political tendency. Lastly, I have caused the said Ballantyne to venture upon an Edinburgh Annual Register, of which I send you a prospectus. I intend to help him myself as far as time will admit, and hope to procure him many respectable coadjutors.

"My own motions southwards remain undetermined, but I conceive I may get to town about the beginning of March, when I expect to find you *en famille* in Portland Place. Our Heber will then

* The purse was, alas! Scott's own. Between May 1805 and the end of 1810, he invested cash to the extent of *at least* £9000 in the Ballantyne companies!

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most likely be in town, and altogether I am much better pleased that the journey is put off till the lively season of gaiety.

"I am busy with my edition of Swift, and treasure your kind hints for my direction as I advance. In summer I think of going to Ireland to pick up any thing that may be yet recoverable of the Dean of St Patrick's. Mrs Scott joins me in kindest and best respects to Mrs Morritt. I am, with great regard, Dear Sir, your faithful humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

The two following letters seem to have been written at the *clerk's table*, the first shortly before, and the second very soon after, the news of the battle of Corunna reached Scotland:—

"*To Robert Southey, Esq., Keswick.*

"Edinburgh, 14th January 1809.

"Dear Southey,

"I have been some time from home in the course of the holidays, but immediately on my return set about procuring the books you wished to see. There are only three of them in our library, namely—

Dobrizzhoffer de Abiponibus, 3 vols.

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A French translation of Gomella's History of Oronoquo.

Ramuzio Navigazioni, &c. &c.

Of these I can only lay my hands immediately on Dobrizzhoffer, which I have sent off by the Carlisle coach, addressed to the care of Jollie the bookseller for you. I do this at my own risk, because we never grant license to send the books out of Scotland, and should I be found to have done so I may be censured, and perhaps my use of the library suspended. At the same time, I think it hard you should take a journey in this deadly cold weather, and trust you will make early enquiry after the book. Keep it out of sight while you use it, and return it as soon as you have finished. I suppose these same Abipones were a nation to my own heart's content, being, as the title-page informs me, *bellicosi et equestres*, like our old Border lads. Should you think of coming hither, which perhaps might be the means of procuring you more information than I can make you aware of, I bespeak you for my guest. I can give you a little chamber in the wall, and you shall go out and in as quietly and freely as your heart can desire, without a human creature saying 'why doest thou so?' Thalaba is in parturition too, and you should in decent curiosity give an eye after him. Yet I will endeavour to recover the other books (now lent out), and send them to

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you in the same way as Dob. travels, unless you recommend another conveyance. But I expect this generosity on my part will rather stir your gallantry to make us a visit when this abominable storm has passed away. My present occupation is highly unpoetical — clouting, in short, and cobbling our old Scottish system of jurisprudence, with a view to reform. I am clerk to a commission under the authority of Parliament for this purpose, which keeps me more than busy enough.

"I have had a high quarrel with Constable and Co. The Edinburgh Review has driven them quite crazy, and its success led them to undervalue those who have been of most use to them — but they shall dearly abye it. The worst is, that being out of a publishing house, I have not interest to be of any service to Coleridge's intended paper.* Ballantyne, the printer, intends to open shop here on the part of his brother, and I am sure will do all he can to favour the work. Does it positively go on?

"I have read Wordsworth's lucubrations in the Courier† and much agree with him. Alas! we want everything but courage and virtue in this desperate contest. Skill, knowledge of mankind, ineffable

* Mr Coleridge's "Friend" was originally published in weekly papers.

† Mr Wordsworth's Remarks on the Convention of Cintra were afterwards collected in a pamphlet

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unnesitating villany, combination of movement and combination of means, are with our adversary. We can only fight like mastiffs, boldly, blindly, and faithfully. I am almost driven to the pass of the Covenanters, when they told the Almighty in their prayers, he should no longer be their God; and I really believe, a few Gazettes more will make me turn Turk or Infidel. Believe me, in great grief of spirit, Dear Southey, ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT.

"Mrs Scott begs kind remembrance to Mrs Southey. The bed in the said chamber in the wall is a double one."

"*To the Same.*

"Edinburgh, 31st January 1809.

"My Dear Southey,

"Yesterday I received your letter, and to-day I despatched Gomella and the third volume of Ramuzio. The other two volumes can also be sent, if you should find it necessary to consult them. The parcel is addressed to the paternal charge of your Keswick carrier. There is no hurry in returning these volumes, so don't derange your operations by hurrying your extracts, only keep them from any profane eye. I dipped into Gomella while

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I was waiting for intelligence from you, and was much edified by the *bonhommie* with which the miracles of the Jesuits are introduced.

" The news from Spain gave me such a mingled feeling, that I never suffered so much in my whole life from the disorder of spirits occasioned by affecting intelligence. My mind has naturally a strong military bent, though my path in life has been so very different. I love a drum and a soldier as heartily as ever Uncle Toby did, and between the pride arising from our gallant bearing, and the deep regret that so much bravery should run to waste, I spent a most disordered and agitated night, never closing my eyes but what I was harassed with visions of broken ranks, bleeding soldiers, dying horses—' and all the currents of a heady fight.'* I agree with you that we want energy in our cabinet—or rather their opinions are so different, that they come to wretched compositions between them, which are worse than the worst course decidedly followed out. Canning is most anxious to support the Spaniards, and would have had a second army at Corunna, but for the positive demand of poor General Moore that empty transports should be sent thither. So the reinforcements were disembarked. I fear it will be found that Moore was rather an excellent officer, than a

* 1*st K. Henry IV. Act II. Scene* 2.

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general of those comprehensive and daring views necessary in his dangerous situation. Had Wellesley been there, the battle of Corunna would have been fought and won at Somosierra, and the ranks of the victors would have been reinforced by the population of Madrid. Would to God we had yet 100,000 men in Spain. I fear not Buonaparte's tactics. The art of fence may do a great deal, but '*a la stoccata*,' as Mercutio says, cannot carry it away from national valour and personal strength. The Opposition have sold or bartered every feeling of patriotism for the most greedy and selfish *egoisme*.

"Ballantyne's brother is setting up here as a bookseller, chiefly for publishing. I will recommend Coleridge's paper to him as strongly as I can. I hope by the time it is commenced he will be enabled to send him a handsome order. From my great regard for his brother, I shall give this young publisher what assistance I can. He is understood to start against Constable and the Reviewers, and publishes the Quarterly. Indeed he is in strict alliance, offensive and defensive, with John Murray of Fleet Street. I have also been labouring a little for the said Quarterly, which I believe you will detect. I hear very high things from Gifford of your article. About your visit to Edinburgh, I hope it will be a month later than you now propose, because my present prospects lead me to think I must be in London

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the whole month of April. Early in May I must return, and will willingly take the lakes in my way in hopes you will accompany me to Edinburgh, which you positively must not think of visiting in my absence.

"Lord Advocate, who is sitting behind me, says the Ministers have resolved not to abandon the Spaniards *coute qui coute*. It is a spirited determination—but they must find a general who has, as the Turks say, *le Diable au corps*, and who, instead of standing staring to see what they mean to do, will teach them to dread those surprises and desperate enterprises by which they have been so often successful. Believe me, Dear Southey, yours affectionately,

WALTER SCOTT.

"Mrs Scott joins me in best compliments to Mrs Southey. I hope she will have a happy hour. Pray, write me word when the books come safe. What is Wordsworth doing, and where the devil is his Doe?* I am not sure if he will thank me for proving that all the Nortons escaped to Flanders, one excepted. I never knew a popular tradition so totally groundless as that respecting their execution at York."

* "The White Doe of Rylestone" was published by Longman and Co. in 1819.

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CHAPTER XIX.

Case of a Poetical Tailor condemned to Death at Edinburgh—His Letters to Scott—Death of Camp—Scott in London—Mr Morritt's description of him as "a Lion" in Town—Dinner at Mr Sotheby's—Coleridge's Fire, Famine, and Slaughter—The Quarterly Review started—First Visit to Rokeby—The Lady of the Lake begun—Excursion to the Trossachs and Loch Lomond—Letter on Byron's English Bards and Scotch Reviewers—Death of Daniel Scott—Correspondence about Mr Canning's Duel with Lord Castlereagh—Miss Baillie's Family Legend acted at Edinburgh—Theatrical Anecdotes—Kemble—Siddons—Terry—Letter on the Death of Miss Seward.

1809–1810.

In the end of 1808, a young man, by name Andrew Stewart, who had figured for some years before

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as a poetical contributor to the Scots Magazine, and inserted there, among other things, a set of stanzas in honour of The Last Minstrel,* was tried, and capitally convicted, on a charge of burglary. He addressed, some weeks after his sentence had been pronounced, the following letters:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Castle Street.*

"Edinburgh Tolbooth, 20th January 1809.

"Sir,

"Although I am a stranger to you, yet I am not to your works, which I have read and admired, and which will continue to be read and admired as long as there remains a taste for true excellence. Previous to committing the crime for which I am now convicted, I composed several poems in the Scottish dialect, which I herewith send for your perusal, and humbly hope you will listen to my tale of misery. I have been a truly unfortunate follower of the Muses. I was born in Edinburgh, of poor, but honest parents. My father is by trade a bookbinder,

* One verse of this production will suffice:—

"Sweetest Minstrel that e'er sung
Of valorous deeds by Scotia done,
Whose wild notes warbled in the win',
Delightful strain!
O'er hills and dales, and vales amang,
We've heard again," &c.

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and my mother dying in 1798, he was left a widower, with five small children, who have all been brought up by his own industry. As soon as I was fit for a trade, he bound me apprentice to a tailor in Edinburgh, but owing to his using me badly, I went to law. The consequence was, I got up my indentures after being only two years in his service. To my father's trade I have to ascribe my first attachment to the Muses. I perused with delight the books that came in the way; and the effusions of the poets of my country I read with rapture. I now formed the resolution of not binding myself to a trade again, as by that means I might get my propensity for reading followed. I acted as clerk to different people, and my character was irreproachable. I determined to settle in life, and for that purpose I married a young woman I formed a strong attachment to. Being out of employment these last nine months, I suffered all the hardships of want, and saw

> 'Poverty, with empty hand
> And eager look, half-naked stand.'—*Ferguson.*

Reduced to this miserable situation, with my wife almost starving, and having no friends to render me the smallest assistance, I resided in a furnished room till I was unable to pay the rent, and then I was literally turned out of doors, like poor Dermody, in poverty and rags. Having no kind hand stretched

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out to help me, I associated with company of very loose manners, till then strangers to me, and by them I was led to commit the crime I am condemned to suffer for. But my mind is so agitated, I can scarce narrate my tale of misery. My age is only twenty-three, and to all appearance will be cut off in the prime. I was tried along with my brother, Robert Stewart, and John M'Intyre, for breaking into the workshop of Peter More, calico-glazer, Edinburgh, and received the dreadful sentence to be executed on the 22d of February next. We have no friends to apply to for Royal Mercy. If I had any kind friend to mention my case to my Lord Justice-Clerk, perhaps I might get my sentence mitigated. You will see my poems are of the humorous cast. Alas! it is now the contrary. I remain your unfortunate humble servant, ANDREW STEWART."

"*To the Same.*

"Tolbooth, Sunday.

"Sir, I received your kind letter last night, enclosing one pound sterling, for which I have only to request you will accept the return of a grateful heart. My prayers, while on earth, will be always for your welfare. Your letter came like a ministering angel to me. The idea of my approaching end darts across

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my brain; and, as our immortal bard, Shakspeare, says, 'harrows up my soul.' Some time since, when chance threw in my way Sir William Forbes's Life of Beattie, the account of the closing scene of Principal Campbell, as therein mentioned, made a deep impression on my mind. 'At a time,' says he, 'when Campbell was just expiring, and had told his wife and niece so, a cordial happened unexpectedly to give some relief. As soon as he was able to speak, he said he wondered to see their faces so melancholy and covered with tears at the apprehension of his departure. '*At that instant,*' said he, '*I felt my mind in such a state in the thoughts of my immediate dissolution, that I can express my feelings in no other way than by saying I was in a rapture.*' There is something awfully satisfactory in the above.

"I have to mention, as a dying man, that it was not the greed of money that made me commit the crime, but the extreme pressure of poverty and want.

"How silent seems all — not a whisper is heard,
Save the guardians of night when they bawl;
How dreary and wild appears all around;
No pitying voice near my call.

"O life, what are all thy gay pleasures and cares,
When deprived of sweet liberty's smile?

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Not hope, in all thy gay charms arrayed,
Can one heavy hour now beguile.

" How sad is the poor convict's sorrowful lot,
Condemned in these walls to remain,
When torn from those that are nearest his heart,
Perhaps ne'er to view them again.

" The beauties of morning now burst on my view,
Remembrance of scenes that are past,
When contentment sat smiling, and happy my lot —
Scenes, alas! formed not for to last.

" Now fled are the hours I delighted to roam
Scotia's hills, dales, and valleys among,
And with rapture would list to the songs of her bards,
And love's tale as it flowed from the tongue.

" Nought but death now awaits me; how dread, but how true!
How ghastly its form does appear!
Soon silent the muse that delighted to view
And sing of the sweets of the year.

" You are the first gentleman I ever sent my poems to, and I never corrected any of them, my mind has been in such a state. I remain, Sir, your grateful unfortunate servant,

ANDREW STEWART."

It appears that Scott, and his good-natured old friend, Mr Manners, the bookseller, who happened at this time to be one of the bailies of Edinburgh,

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exerted their joint influence in this tailor-poet's behalf, and with such success, that his sentence was commuted for one of transportation for life. A thin octavo pamphlet, entitled, "POEMS, chiefly in the Scottish dialect, by Andrew Stewart; printed for the benefit of the Author's Father, and sold by Manners and Miller, and A. Constable and Co., 1809," appeared soon after the convict's departure for Botany Bay. But as to his fortunes in that new world I possess no information. There seemed to me something so striking in the working of his feelings as expressed in his letters to Scott, that I thought the reader would forgive this little episode.

In the course of February, Mr John Ballantyne had proceeded to London, for the purpose of introducing himself to the chief publishers there in his new capacity, and especially of taking Mr Murray's instructions respecting the Scotch management of the Quarterly Review. As soon as the spring vacation began, Scott followed him by sea. He might naturally have wished to be at hand while his new partner was forming arrangements on which so much must depend; but some circumstances in the procedure of the Scotch Law Commission had made the Lord Advocate request his presence at this time in town. There he and Mrs Scott took up their quarters, as usual, under the roof of their kind old friends the Dumergues; while their eldest girl enjoyed the

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advantage of being domesticated with the Miss Baillies at Hampstead. They staid more than two months, and this being his first visit to town since his fame had been crowned by Marmion, he was of course more than ever the object of general curiosity and attention. Mr Morritt saw much of him, both at his own house in Portland Place and elsewhere, and I transcribe a few sentences from his *memoranda* of the period.

"Scott," his friend says, "more correctly than any other man I ever knew, appreciated the value of that apparently enthusiastic *engouement* which the world of London shows to the fashionable wonder of the year. During this sojourn of 1809, the homage paid him would have turned the head of any less-gifted man of eminence. It neither altered his opinions, nor produced the affectation of despising it; on the contrary, he received it, cultivated it, and repaid it in its own coin. 'All this is very flattering,' he would say, 'and very civil; and if people are amused with hearing me tell a parcel of old stories, or recite a pack of ballads to lovely young girls and gaping matrons, they are easily pleased, and a man would be very ill-natured who would not give pleasure so cheaply conferred.' If he dined with us and found any new faces, 'Well, do you want me to play lion to-day?' was his usual question — 'I will roar if you like it to your heart's content.' He would,

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indeed, in such cases put forth all his inimitable powers of entertainment—and day after day surprised me by their unexpected extent and variety. Then, as the party dwindled, and we were left alone, he laughed at himself, quoted—'Yet know that I one Snug the joiner am—no lion fierce,' &c.—and was at once himself again.

"He often lamented the injurious effects for literature and genius resulting from the influence of London celebrity on weaker minds, especially in the excitement of ambition for this subordinate and ephemeral *reputation du salon*. 'It may be a pleasant gale to sail with,' he said, 'but it never yet led to a port that I should like to anchor in;' nor did he willingly endure, either in London or in Edinburgh, the little exclusive circles of literary society, much less their occasional fastidiousness and petty partialities.

"One story which I heard of him from Dr Howley, now Archbishop of Canterbury (for I was not present), was very characteristic. The Doctor was one of a grand congregation of lions, where Scott and Coleridge, *cum multis aliis*, attended at Sotheby's. Poets and poetry were the topics of the table, and there was plentiful recitation of effusions as yet unpublished, which of course obtained abundant applause. Coleridge repeated more than one, which as Dr H. thought, were eulogized by some of the

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company with something like affectation, and a desire to humble Scott by raising a poet of inferior reputation on his shoulders. Scott, however, joined in the compliments as cordially as anybody, until, in his turn, he was invited to display some of his occasional poetry, much of which he must, no doubt, have written. Scott said he had published so much, he had nothing of his own left that he could think worth their hearing, but he would repeat a little copy of verses which he had shortly before seen in a provincial newspaper, and which seemed to him almost as good as anything they had been listening to with so much pleasure. He repeated the stanzas now so well known of 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter.' The applauses that ensued were faint — then came slight criticisms, from which Scott defended the unknown author. At last a more bitter antagonist opened, and fastening upon one line, cried, 'This at least is absolute nonsense.' Scott denied the charge — the Zoilus persisted — until Coleridge, out of all patience, exclaimed, 'For God's sake let Mr Scott alone — I wrote the poem.' This exposition of the real worth of dinner criticism can hardly be excelled.*

* It may amuse the reader to turn to Mr Coleridge's own stately account of this lion-show in Grosvenor Street, in the Preface to his celebrated Eclogue. There was one person present, it seems, who had been in the secret of its authorship — Sir Humphrey

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"He often complained of the real dulness of parties where each guest arrived under the implied and tacit obligation of exhibiting some extraordinary powers of talk or wit. 'If,' he said, 'I encounter men of the world, men of business, odd or striking characters of professional excellence in any department, I am in my element, for they cannot lionize me without my returning the compliment and learning something from them.' He was much with George Ellis, Canning, and Croker, and delighted in them, — as indeed who did not? — but he loved to study eminence of every class and sort, and his rising fame gave him easy access to gratify all his curiosity."

The meetings with Canning, Croker, and Ellis, to which Mr Morritt alludes, were, as may be supposed, chiefly occupied with the affairs of the Quar-

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Davy; and no one could have enjoyed the scene more than he must have done. "At the house," Coleridge says, "of a gentleman who, by the principles and corresponding virtues of a sincere Christian, consecrates a cultivated genius and the favourable accidents of birth, opulence, and splendid connexions, it was my good fortune to meet, in a dinner party, with more men of celebrity in science or polite literature than are commonly found collected around the same table. In the course of conversation, one of the party reminded an illustrious poet," &c. &c. — *Coleridge's Poetical Works*, Edition 1835, vol. i. p. 274.

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terly Review. The first number of that Journal appeared while Scott was in London: it contained three articles from his pen — namely, one on the Reliques of Burns; another on the Chronicle of the Cid; and a third on Sir John Carr's Tour through Scotland. His conferences with the editor and publisher were frequent; and the latter certainly contemplated, at this time, a most close and intimate connexion with him, not only as a reviewer, but an author; and, consequently, with both the concerns of the Messrs Ballantyne. Scott continued for some time to be a very active contributor to the Quarterly Review; nor, indeed, was his connexion with it ever entirely suspended. But John Ballantyne transacted business in a fashion which soon cooled, and in no very long time dissolved, the general "alliance offensive and defensive" with Murray, which Scott had announced before leaving Edinburgh to both Southey and Ellis.

On his return northwards he spent a fortnight in Yorkshire with Mr Morritt; but his correspondence, from which I resume my extracts, will show, among other things, the lively impression made on him by his first view of Rokeby.

The next of these letters reminds me, however, that I should have mentioned sooner the death of Camp, the first of not a few dogs whose names will

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be "freshly remembered" as long as their master's works are popular. This favourite began to droop early in 1808, and became incapable of accompanying Scott in his rides; but he preserved his affection and sagacity to the last. At Ashestiel, as the servant was laying the cloth for dinner, he would address the dog lying on his mat by the fire, and say, "Camp, my good fellow, the Sheriff's coming home by the ford — or by the hill;" and the sick animal would immediately bestir himself to welcome his master, going out at the back door or the front door, according to the direction given, and advancing as far as he was able, either towards the ford of the Tweed, or the bridge over the Glenkinnon burn beyond Laird Nippy's gate. He died about January 1809, and was buried in a fine moonlight night, in the little garden behind the house in Castle Street, immediately opposite to the window at which Scott usually sat writing. My wife tells me she remembers the whole family standing in tears about the grave, as her father himself smoothed down the turf above Camp with the saddest expression of face she had ever seen in him. He had been engaged to dine abroad that day, but apologized on account of "the death of a dear old friend;" and Mr Macdonald Buchanan was not at all surprised that he should have done so, when it came out next morning that Camp was no more.

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"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Edinburgh, July 8, 1809.

"My Dear Ellis,

"We reached home about a fortnight ago, having lingered a little while at Rokeby Park, the seat of our friend Morritt, and one of the most enviable places I have ever seen, as it unites the richness and luxuriance of English vegetation with the romantic variety of glen, torrent, and copse, which dignifies our northern scenery. The Greta and Tees, two most beautiful and rapid rivers, join their currents in the demesne. The banks of the Tees resemble, from the height of the rocks, the glen of Roslin, so much and justly admired. The Greta is the scene of a comic romance,* of which I think I remember giving you the outline. It concerns the history of a 'Felon Sowe,'—

'Which won'd in Rokeby wood,
Ran endlong Greta side,'

bestowed by Ralph of Rokeby on the freres of Richmond—and the misadventures of the holy fathers in their awkward attempts to catch this intractable

* Scott printed this Ballad in the Notes to his poem of Rokeby.

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animal. We had the pleasure to find all our little folks well, and are now on the point of shifting quarters to Ashestiel. I have supplied the vacancy occasioned by the death of poor old Camp with a terrier puppy of the old shaggy Celtic breed. He is of high pedigree, and was procured with great difficulty by the kindness of Miss Dunlop of Dunlop; so I have christened him Wallace, as the donor is a descendant of the Guardian of Scotland. Having given you all this curious and valuable information about my own affairs, let me call your attention to the enclosed, which was in fact the principal cause of my immediately troubling you." * * *

The enclosure, and the rest of the letter, refer to the private affairs of Mr Southey, in whose favour Scott had for some time back been strenuously using his interest with his friends in the Government. How well he had, while in London, read the feelings of some of those ministers towards each other, appears from various letters written upon his return to Scotland. It may be sufficient to quote part of one addressed to the distinguished author whose fortunes he was exerting himself to promote. To him Scott says (14th June), — " Mr Canning's opportunities to serve you will soon be numerous, or they will soon be gone altogether; for he is of a different mould from some of his colleagues, and a

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decided foe to those half measures which I know you detest as much as I do. It is not his fault that the cause of Spain is not at this moment triumphant. This I know, and the time will come when the world will know it too."

Before fixing himself at Ashestiel for the autumn, he had undertaken to have a third poem ready for publication by the end of the year, and probably made some progress in the composition of the Lady of the Lake. On the rising of the Court in July, he went, accompanied by Mrs Scott and his eldest daughter, to revisit the localities, so dear to him in the days of his juvenile rambling, which he had chosen for the scene of his fable. He gave a week to his old friends at Cambusmore, and ascertained, in his own person, that a good horseman, well mounted, might gallop from the shore of Loch Vennachar to the rock of Stirling within the space allotted for that purpose to FitzJames. From Cambusmore the party proceeded to Ross Priory, and, under the guidance of Mr Macdonald Buchanan, explored the islands of Loch Lomond, Arrochar, Loch Sloy, and all the scenery of a hundred desperate conflicts between the Macfarlanes, the Colquhouns, and the Clan Alpine. At Buchanan House, which is very near Ross Priory, Scott's friends, Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart, were then visiting the Duke of Montrose; he joined them

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there, and read to them the Stag Chase, which he had just completed under the full influence of the *genius loci.*

It was on this occasion, at Buchanan House, that he first saw Lord Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." On this subject he says, in his Introduction to Marmion of 1830 — "When Byron wrote his famous satire, I had my share of flagellation among my betters. My crime was having written a poem for a thousand pounds, which was no otherwise true than that I sold the copyright for that sum. Now, not to mention that an author can hardly be censured for accepting such a sum as the booksellers are willing to give him, especially as the gentlemen of the trade made no complaints of their bargain, I thought the interference with my private affairs was rather beyond the limits of literary satire. I was, moreover, so far from having had anything to do with the offensive criticism in the Edinburgh, that I had remonstrated with the editor, because I thought the 'Hours of Idleness' treated with undue severity. They were written, like all juvenile poetry, rather from the recollection of what had pleased the author in others, than what had been suggested by his own imagination; but nevertheless I thought they contained passages of noble promise."

I need hardly transcribe the well-known lines —

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> "Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
> The golden-crested haughty Marmion,—"

down to

> "For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
> And bid a long 'good-night to Marmion,—'"

with his Lordship's note on the last line—"Good-night to Marmion, the pathetic and also prophetic exclamation of Henry Blount, Esquire, on the death of honest Marmion."—But it may entertain my readers to compare the style in which Scott alludes to Byron's assault in the preface of 1830, with that of one of his contemporary letters on the subject. Addressing (August 7, 1809) the gentleman in whose behalf he had been interceding with Mr Canning, he says—"By the way, is the ancient ****, whose decease is to open our quest, thinking of a better world? I only ask because about three years ago I accepted the office I hold in the Court of Session, the revenue to accrue to me only on the death of the old incumbent. But my friend has since taken out a new lease of life, and unless I get some Border lad to cut his throat, may, for aught I know, live as long as I shall;—such odious deceivers are these invalids. Mine reminds me of Sinbad's Old Man of the Sea, and will certainly throttle me if I can't somehow dismount him. If I were once in possession of my reversionary income, I would, like you, bid farewell to the drudgery of literature,

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and do nothing but what I pleased, which might be another phrase for doing very little. I was always an admirer of the modest wish of a retainer in one of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays—

> 'I would not be a serving man
> To carry the cloak-bag still,
> Nor would I be a falconer,
> The greedy hawks to fill;
> But I would be in a good house,
> And have a good master too,
> But I would eat and drink of the best,
> And *no* work would I do.'*

In the mean time, it is funny enough to see a whelp of a young Lord Byron abusing me, of whose circumstances he knows nothing, for endeavouring to scratch out a living with my pen. God help the bear, if, having little else to eat, he must not even suck his own paws. I can assure the noble imp of fame it is not my fault that I was not born to a park and £5000 a-year, as it is not his lordship's merit, although it may be his great good fortune, that he was not born to live by his literary talents or success. Adieu, my dear friend. I shall be impatient to hear how your matters fadge."

This gentleman's affairs are again alluded to in a letter to Ellis, dated Ashestiel, September 14:—"I

* Old Merrythought— *The Knight of the Burning Pestle, Act IV. Scene 5.*

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do not write to whet a purpose that is not blunted, but to express my anxious wishes that your kind endeavours may succeed while it is called *to-day*, for, by all tokens, it will soon be *yesterday* with this Ministry. And they well deserve it, for crossing, jostling, and hampering the measures of the only man among them fit to be intrusted with the salvation of the country. The spring-tide may, for aught I know, break in this next session of Parliament. There is an evil fate upon us in all we do at home and abroad, else why should the conqueror of Talavera be retreating from the field of his glory at a moment when, by all reasonable calculation, he should have been the soul and mover of a combined army of 150,000 English, Spaniards, and Portuguese? And why should Gifford employ himself at home in the thriftless exercise of correction, as if Mercury, instead of stretching to a race himself, were to amuse himself with starting a bedrid cripple, and making a pair of crutches for him with his own hand? Much might have been done, and may yet be done; but we are not yet in the right way. Is there no one among you who can throw a Congreve rocket among the gerunds and supines of that model of pedants, Dr Philopatris Parr? I understand your foreign lingos too little to attempt it, but pretty things might be said upon the memorable tureen which he begged of Lord Somebody, whom he afterwards wished to prove to be mad. For example, I would adopt some of

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the leading phrases of *independent, high-souled, contentus parvo,* and so forth, with which he is bespattered in the Edinburgh,* and declare it *our* opinion, that, if indulged with the three wishes of Prior's tale, he would answer, like the heroine Corisca —

> ' A ladle to my silver dish
> Is all I want, is all I wish '

I did *not* review Miss Edgeworth, nor do I think it all well done; at least, it falls below my opinion of that lady's merits. Indeed I have contributed nothing to the last Review, and am, therefore, according to all rules, the more entitled to criticise it freely. The conclusion of the article on Sir John Moore is transcendently written; and I think I can venture to say, ' *aut Erasmus, aut Diabolus.*' Your sugar cake is very far from being a heavy *bon-bon;* but there I think we stop. The Missionaries, though very good, is on a subject rather stale, and much of the rest is absolute wading.†

" As an excuse for my own indolence, I have been in the Highlands for some time past; and who should I meet there, of all fowls in the air, but your friend Mr Blackburn, to whom I was so much obliged for the care he took of my late unfortunate

* See Article on Dr Parr's Spittal Sermon, in the Edinburgh Review, No. I. October 1802.

† Quarterly Review, No. III. August 1809.

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relative, at your friendly request. The recognition was unfortunately made just when I was leaving the country, and as he was in a gig, and I on the driving-seat of a carriage, the place of meeting a narrow Highland road, which looked as if forty patent ploughs had furrowed it, we had not time or space for so long a greeting as we could have wished. He has a capital good house on the banks of the Leven, about three miles below its discharge from the lake, and very near the classical spot where Matthew Bramble and his whole family were conducted by Smollett, and where Smollett himself was born. There is a new inducement for you to come to Caledon. Your health, thank God, is now no impediment; and I am told sugar and rum excel even whisky, so your purse must be proportionally distended."

The unfortunate brother, the blot of the family, to whom Scott alludes in this letter, had disappointed all the hopes under which his friends sent him to Jamaica. It may be remarked, as characteristic of Scott at this time, that in the various letters to Ellis concerning Daniel, he speaks of him as his *relation*, never as his *brother;* and it must also be mentioned as a circumstance suggesting that Daniel had retained, after all, some sense of pride, that his West-Indian patron was allowed by himself to remain, to the end of their connexion, in ignorance of what his distin-

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guished brother had thus thought fit to suppress. Mr Blackburn, in fact, never knew that Daniel was Walter Scott's brother, until he was applied to for some information respecting him on my own behalf, after this narrative was begun. The story is shortly, that the adventurer's habits of dissipation proved incurable; but he finally left Jamaica under a stigma which Walter Scott regarded with utter severity. Being employed in some service against a refractory or insurgent body of negroes, he had exhibited a lamentable deficiency of spirit and conduct He returned to Scotland a dishonoured man; and though he found shelter and compassion from his mother, his brother would never see him again. Nay, when soon after, his health, shattered by dissolute indulgence, and probably the intolerable load of shame, gave way altogether, and he died as yet a young man, the poet refused either to attend his funeral or to wear mourning for him like the rest of the family. Thus sternly, when in the height and pride of his blood, could Scott, whose heart was never hardened against the distress of an enemy, recoil from the disgrace of a brother. It is a more pleasing part of my duty to add, that he spoke to me, twenty years afterwards, in terms of great and painful contrition for the austerity with which he had conducted himself on this occasion. I must add, moreover, that he took a warm interest in a

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natural child whom Daniel had bequeathed to his mother's care; and after the old lady's death, religiously supplied her place as the boy's protector.

About this time the edition of Sir Ralph Sadler's State Papers, &c. (3 vols. royal 4to) was at length completed by Scott, and published by Constable; but the letters which passed between the Editor and the bookseller show that their personal estrangement had as yet undergone slender alteration. The collection of the Sadler papers was chiefly the work of Mr Arthur Clifford — but Scott drew up the Memoir and Notes, and superintended the printing. His account of the Life of Sadler* extends to thirty pages; and both it and his notes are written with all that lively solicitude about points of antiquarian detail, which accompanied him through so many tasks less attractive than the personal career of a distinguished statesman intimately connected with the fortunes of Mary Queen of Scots. Some volumes of the edition of Somers's Tracts (which he had undertaken for Mr Miller and other booksellers of London two or three years before) were also published about the same period; but that compilation was not finished (13 vols. royal 4to) until 1812. His part in it (for which the booksellers paid him 1300 guineas), was diligently performed, and shows

* Republished in the Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. iv.

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abundant traces of his sagacious understanding and graceful expression. His editorial labours on Dryden, Swift, and these other collections, were gradually storing his mind with that minute and accurate knowledge of the leading persons and events both of Scotch and English history, which made his conversation on such subjects that of one who had rather lived with than read about the departed; while, unlike other antiquaries, he always preserved the keenest interest in the transactions of his own time.

The reader has seen, that during his stay in London in the spring of this year, Scott became strongly impressed with a suspicion that the Duke of Portland's Cabinet could not much longer hold together; and the letters which have been quoted, when considered along with the actual course of subsequent events, can leave little doubt that he had gathered this impression from the tone of Mr Canning's private conversation as to the recent management of the War Department. On the 20th of September, Lord Castlereagh tendered his resignation, and wrote the same day to Mr Canning in these terms: "Having," he said, "pronounced it unfit that I should remain charged with the conduct of the war, and made my situation as a Minister of the Crown dependent on your will and pleasure, you continued to sit in the same Cabinet with me, and leave me not only in the persuasion that I possessed your con

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fidence and support as a colleague, but allowed me, in breach of every principle of good faith, both public and private, to originate and proceed in the execution of a new enterprise of the most arduous and important nature (the Walcheren expedition) with your apparent concurrence and ostensible approbation. You were fully aware that, if my situation in the government had been disclosed to me, I could not have submitted to remain one moment in office, without the entire abandonment of my private honour and public duty. You knew I was deceived, and you continued to deceive me." *

The result was a duel on the morning of the 21st, in which Mr Canning was attended by Mr Charles Ellis (now Lord Seaford) as his second. Mr Canning, at the second fire, was wounded in the thigh. Both combatants retired from office; the Duke of Portland, whose health was entirely broken, resigned the premiership; and after fruitless negotiations with Lords Grey and Grenville, Mr Percival became First Lord of the Treasury, as well as Chancellor of the Exchequer; while the Marquis Wellesley took the Seals of the Foreign Department, and Lord Liverpool removed from the Home

* In the Preface to Mr Therry's Compilation of Mr Canning's Speeches, the reader will find the contemporary documents, on which alone a fair judgment can be formed as to the origin and nature of Mr Canning's differences with Lord Castlereagh.

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Office to that which Lord Castlereagh had occupied. There were some other changes, but Scott's friend, Mr R. Dundas (now Lord Melville), remained in his place at the head of the Board of Control.

While the public mind was occupied with the duel and its yet uncertain results, Scott wrote as follows to the nearest relation and most intimate friend of Mr Canning's second:—

"*To George Ellis, Esq.*

"Ashestiel, Sept. 26, 1809.

"My Dear Ellis,

"Your letter gave me great pleasure, especially the outside, for Canning's frank assured me that his wound was at least not materially serious. So, for once, the envelope of your letter was even more welcome than the contents. That harebrained Irishman's letter carries absurdity upon the face of it, for surely he would have had much more reason for personal animosity had Canning made the matter public, against the wishes of his uncle, and every other person concerned, than for his consenting, at their request, that it should remain a secret, and leaving it to them to make such commmunication to Lord C. as they should think proper, and *when* they should think proper. I am ill situated here for the explanations I would wish to give, but I have forwarded

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copies of the letters to Lord Dalkeith, a high-spirited and independent young nobleman, in whose opinion Mr Canning would, I think, wish to stand well. I have also taken some measures to prevent the good folks of Edinburgh from running after any straw that may be thrown into the wind. I wrote a very hurried note to Mr C. Ellis the instant I *saw* the accident in the papers, not knowing exactly where you might be, and trusting he would excuse my extreme anxiety and solicitude upon the occasion.

"I see, among other reports, that my friend, Robert Dundas, is mentioned as Secretary at War. I confess I shall be both vexed and disappointed if he, of whose talents and opinions I think very highly, should be prevailed on to embark in so patched and crazy a vessel as can now be lashed together, and that upon a sea which promises to be sufficiently boisterous. My own hopes of every kind are as low as the heels of my boots, and methinks I would say to any friend of mine as Tybalt says to Benvolio—'What! art thou drawn among these heartless hinds?' I suppose the Doctor will be *move* the first, and then the Whigs will come in like a land-flood, and lay the country at the feet of Buonaparte for peace. This, if his devil does not fail, he will readily patch up, and send a few hundred thousands among our coach-driving Noblesse, and perhaps among our Princes of the Blood. With the influ-

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ence acquired by such *gages d'amitié*, and by ostentatious hospitality at his court to all those idiots who will forget the rat-trap of the *detenus*, and crowd there for novelty, there will be, in the course of five or six years, what we have never yet seen, a real French party in this country. To this you are to add all the Burdettites, men who, rather than want combustibles, will fetch brimstone from hell. It is not these whom I fear, however,—it is the vile and degrading spirit of *egoisme* so prevalent among the higher ranks, especially among the highest. God forgive me if I do them injustice, but I think champagne duty free would go a great way to seduce some of them; and is it not a strong symptom when people, knowing and feeling their own weakness, will, from mere selfishness and pride, suffer the vessel to drive on the shelves, rather than she should be saved by the only pilot capable of the task? I will be much obliged to you to let me know what is likely to be done—whether any fight can yet be made, or if all is over. Lord Melville had been furious for some time against this Administration—I think *he* will hardly lend a hand to clear the wreck. I should think, if Marquis Wellesley returns, he might form a steady Administration; but God wot, he must condemn most of the present rotten planks before he can lay down the new vessel. Above all, let me know how Canning's recovery goes on. We

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must think what is to be done about the Review. Ever yours truly, W. S."

Scott's views as to the transactions of this period, and the principal parties concerned in them, were considerably altered by the observation of subsequent years; but I have been much interested with watching the course of his sentiments and opinions on such subjects; and, in the belief that others may feel in the same way with myself, I shall insert, without comment, some further extracts from this correspondence:—

"*To the Same.*

"Ashestiel, Nov. 3, 1809.

"My Dear Ellis,

"I had your letter some time ago, which gave me less comfort in the present public emergency than your letters usually do. Frankly, I see great doubts, not to say an impossibility, of Canning's attaining that rank among the Opposition which will enable him to command the use of their shoulders to place him where — you cannot be more convinced than I am — he is entitled to stand. The *condottieri* of the Grenvilles, — for they have no political principles, and therefore no political *party*, detached from their immense influence over individuals — will hardly

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be seduced from their standard to that of Canning, by an eloquence which has been exerted upon them in vain, even when they might have hoped to be gainers by listening to it. The *soi-disant* Whigs stick together like burs. The ragged regiment of Burdett and Folkstone is under yet stricter discipline, for you may have observed that no lover was ever so jealous of his mistress as Sir Francis is of his mob popularity — witness the fate of Paull, Tierney, even Wardle; in short, of whomsoever presumed to rival the brazen image whom the mob of Westminster has set up.* That either, or both of these parties, will be delighted with the accession of our friend's wisdom and eloquence, cannot for a moment be disputed. That the Grenvilles, in particular, did he only propose to himself a slice of the great pudding, would allow him to help himself where the plums lie thickest, cannot be doubted. But I think it is very doubtful whether they, closely banded and confident of triumph as they at present are, will accept of a colleague upon terms which would make him a master; and unless Canning has these, it appears to me that *we* (the Republic) should be no better than if he had retained his office in the present, or rather late, Administration. But how far, in throwing himself altogether into the arms of

* Sir Francis Burdett has lived to show how unjustly the Tories of 1809 read his political character.

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Opposition at this crisis, Canning will injure himself with the large and sound party who profess *Pittism*, is, I really think, worthy of consideration. The influence of his name is at present as great as you or I could wish it; but those who wish to undermine it want but, according to our Scottish proverb, 'a hair to make a tether of.' I admit his hand is very difficult to play, and much as I love and admire him, I am most interested because it is the decided interest of his country, that he should pique, repique, and capot his antagonists. But you know much of the delicacy of the game lies in *discarding* — so I hope he will be in no hurry on throwing out his cards.

"I am the more anxious on this score, because I feel an internal conviction that neither Marquis Wellesley nor Lord Melville will lend their names to bolster out this rump of an Administration. Symptoms of this are said to have transpired in Scotland, but in this retirement I cannot learn upon what authority. Should this prove so, I confess my best wishes would be realized, because I cannot see how Percival could avoid surrendering at discretion, and taking, perhaps, a peerage. We should then have an Administration *à la Pitt*, which is a much better thing than an Opposition, howsoever conducted or headed, which, like a wave of the sea, forms indeed but a single body when it is rolling towards the shore, but dashes into foam and dispersion the instant it reaches its

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object. Should Canning and the above-named noble peers come to understand each other, joined to all among the present Ministry whom their native good sense, and an attachment to good warm places, will lead to hear reason, it does seem to me that we might form a deeper front to the enemy than we have presented since the death of Pitt, or rather since the dissolution of his first Administration. But if this be a dream, as it may very probably be, I still hope Canning will take his own ground in Parliament, and hoist his own standard. Sooner or later it must be successful. So much for politics — about which, after all, my neighbours the *blackcocks* know about as much as I do.

"I have a great deal to write you about a new poem which I have on the anvil — also, upon the melancholy death of a favourite greyhound bitch — rest her body, since I dare not say soul! She was of high blood and excellent promise. Should any of your sporting friends have a whelp to spare, of a good kind, and of the female sex, I would be grateful beyond measure, especially if she has had the distemper. As I have quite laid aside the gun, coursing is my only and constant amusement, and my valued pair of four-legged champions, Douglas and Percy, wax old and *unfeary*. Ever yours truly,

W. S"

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"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Gloucester Lodge, Nov. 13, 1809.

"My Dear Sir,

"I am very sensibly gratified by your kind expressions, whether of condolence or congratulation, and I acknowledge, if not (with your Highland writer) the synonymousness of the two terms, at least the union of the two sentiments, as applied to my present circumstances. I am not so heroically fond of being *out (quâtenus out)*, as not to consider that a matter of condolence. But I am at the same time sufficiently convinced of the desirableness of not being *in*, when one should be *in* to no purpose, either of public advantage or personal credit, to be satisfied that on that ground I am entitled to your congratulations.

"I should be very happy indeed to look forward, with the prospect of being able to realize it, to the trip to Scotland which you suggest to me; and still more to the visit included therein, which, as you hold it out, would not be the least part of my temptation. Of this, however, I hope we shall have opportunities of talking before the season arrives; for I reckon upon your spring visit to London, and think of it, I assure you, with great pleasure, as likely to happen at a period when I shall have it

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more in my power than I have had on any former occasion to enjoy the advantage of it. You will find me not in quite so romantic a scene of seclusion and tranquillity here as that which you describe — but very tranquil and secluded nevertheless, at a mile and a half's distance from Hyde Park Corner — a distance considerable enough, as I now am, to save me from any very overwhelming 'unda salutantium.'

"Here, or any where else, I beg you to believe in the very sincere satisfaction which I shall derive from your society, and which I do derive from the assurance of your regard and good opinion. Ever, my Dear Sir, very truly and faithfully yours,

GEO. CANNING.

"P. S. — I expect, in the course of this week, to send you a copy of a more ample statement of the circumstances of my retirement, which the misrepresentations of some who, I *think*, must have known they were misrepresenting (though *that* I must not say), have rendered necessary."

I could not quote more largely from these political letters without trespassing against the feelings of distinguished individuals still alive. I believe the extracts which I have given are sufficient to illustrate the sagacity with which Scott had at that early period apprehended the dangers to which the political

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career of Mr Canning was exposed, by the jealousy of the old Tory aristocracy on the one hand, and the insidious flatteries of Whig intriguers on the other. I willingly turn from his politics to some other matters, which about this time occupied a large share of his thoughts.

He had from his boyish days a great love for theatrical representation; and so soon as circumstances enabled him to practise extended hospitality, the chief actors of his time, whenever they happened to be in Scotland, were among the most acceptable of his guests. Mr Charles Young was, I believe, the first of them of whom he saw much: As early as 1803 I find him writing of that gentleman to the Marchioness of Abercorn as a valuable addition to the society of Edinburgh; and down to the end of Scott's life, Mr Young was never in the north without visiting him.

Another graceful and intelligent performer in whom he took a special interest, and of whom he saw a great deal in his private circle, was Miss Smith, afterwards Mrs Bartley. But at the period of which I am now treating, his principal theatrical intimacy was with John Philip Kemble, and his sister Mrs Siddons, both of whom he appears to have often met at Lord Abercorn's villa near Stanmore, during his spring visits to London after the first establishment of his poetical celebrity. Of John Kemble's

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personal character and manners, he has recorded his impressions in a pleasing reviewal of Mr Boaden's Memoir.* The great tragedian's love of black-letter learning, especially of dramatic antiquities, afforded a strong bond of fellowship; and I have heard Scott say that the only man who ever seduced him into very deep potations in his middle life was Kemble. He was frequently at Ashestiel, and the "fat Scotch butler," whom Mr Skene has described to us, by name *John Macbeth*, made sore complaints of the bad hours kept on such occasions in one of the most regular of households; but the watchings of the night were not more grievous to "Cousin Macbeth," as Kemble called the honest *beauffetier*, than were the hazards and fatigues of the morning to the representative of "the Scotch usurper." Kemble's miseries during a rough gallop were quite as grotesque as those of his namesake, and it must be owned that species of distress was one from the contemplation of which his host could never derive anything but amusement.

I have heard Scott chuckle with particular glee over the recollection of an excursion to the vale of the Ettrick, near which river the party were pursued by a bull. "Come, King John," said he, "we must even take the water," and accordingly he and

* *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xx.

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his daughter plunged into the stream. But King John, halting on the bank and surveying the river, which happened to be full and turbid, exclaimed, in his usual solemn manner,

——"The flood is angry, Sheriff;
Methinks I'll get me up into a tree." *

It was well that the dogs had succeeded in diverting the bull, because there was no tree at hand which could have sustained King John, nor, had that been otherwise, could so stately a personage have dismounted and ascended with such alacrity as circumstances would have required. He at length followed his friends through the river with the rueful dignity of Don Quixote.

It was this intercourse which led Scott to exert himself very strenuously, when some change in the administration of the Edinburgh theatre became necessary—(I believe in 1808),—to prevail on Mr Henry Siddons, the nephew of Kemble, to undertake

* John Kemble's most familiar table-talk often flowed into blank verse; and so indeed did his sister's. Scott (who was a capital mimic) often repeated her tragic exclamation to a footboy during a dinner at Ashestiel—

"You've brought me water, boy,—I asked for beer."

Another time, dining with a Provost of Edinburgh, she ejaculated, in answer to her host's apology for his *piece de resistance*—

"Beef cannot be too salt for me, my Lord!"

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the lease and management. Such an arrangement would, he expected, induce both Kemble and his sister to be more in Scotland than hitherto; and what he had seen of young Siddons himself led him to prognosticate a great improvement in the whole conduct of the northern stage. His wishes were at length accomplished in the summer of 1809. On this occasion he purchased a share, and became one of the acting trustees for the general body of proprietors; and thenceforth, during a long series of years, he continued to take a very lively concern in the proceedings of the Edinburgh company. In this he was plentifully encouraged by his domestic *camarilla;* for his wife had all a Frenchwoman's passion for the *spectacle;* and the elder of the two Ballantynes (both equally devoted to the company of players) was a regular newspaper critic of theatrical affairs, and in that capacity had already attained a measure of authority supremely gratifying to himself.

The first new play produced by Henry Siddons was the Family Legend of Joanna Baillie. This was, I believe, the first of her dramas that ever underwent the test of representation in her native kingdom; and Scott appears to have exerted himself most indefatigably in its behalf. He was consulted about all the *minutiæ* of costume, attended every rehearsal, and supplied the prologue. The play was

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better received than any other which the gifted authoress has since subjected to the same experiment; and how ardently Scott enjoyed its success will appear from a few specimens of the many letters which he addressed to his friend on the occasion.

The first of these letters is dated Edinburgh, October 27, 1809. He had gone into town for the purpose of entering his eldest boy at the High School:—

"On receiving your long kind letter yesterday, I sought out Siddons, who was equally surprised and delighted at your liberal arrangement about the Lady of the Rock. I will put all the names to rights, and retain enough of locality and personality to please the antiquary, without the least risk of bringing the clan Gillian about our ears. I went through the theatre, which is the most complete little thing of the kind I ever saw, elegantly fitted up, and large enough for every purpose. I trust, with you, that in this as in other cases, our Scotch poverty may be a counterbalance to our Scotch pride, and that we shall not need in my time a larger or more expensive building. Siddons himself observes, that even for the purposes of show (so paramount now-a-days) a moderate stage is better fitted than a large one, because the machinery is pliable and manageable in proportion to its size. With regard to the equipment of the Family Legend, I have been much diverted

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with a discovery which I have made. I had occasion to visit our Lord Provost (by profession a stocking-weaver), and was surprised to find the worthy magistrate filled with a new-born zeal for the drama. He spoke of Mr Siddons' merits with enthusiasm, and of Miss Baillie's powers almost with tears of rapture. Being a curious investigator of cause and effect, I never rested until I found out that this theatric rage which had seized his lordship of a sudden, was owing to a large order for hose, pantaloons, and plaids for equipping the rival clans of Campbell and Maclean, and which Siddons was sensible enough to send to the warehouse of our excellent provost.* . . . . The Laird† is just gone to the High School, and it is with inexpressible feeling that I hear him trying to babble the first words of Latin, the signal of commencing serious

* This magistrate was Mr William Coulter (the salt-beef Amphitryon), who died in office in April 1810, and is said to have been greatly consoled on his deathbed by the prospect of so grand a funeral as must needs occur in the case of an actual Lord Provost of Auld Reekie. Scott used to *take him off* as saying at some public meeeting, "Gentlemen, though doomed to the trade of a stocking-weaver, I was born with the soul of a *Sheepio!*"—(Scipio.)

† Young Walter Scott was called Gilnockie, the Laird of Gilnockie, or simply *the Laird*, in consequence of his childish admiration for Johnnie Armstrong, whose ruined tower is still extant at Gilnockie on the Esk, nearly opposite Netherby

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study, for his acquirements hitherto have been under the mild dominion of a governess. I felt very like Leontes—

> "Looking on the lines
> Of my boy's face, methought I did recoil
> Thirty good years."—*

And O! my dear Miss Baillie, what a tale thirty years can tell even in an uniform and unhazardous course of life! How much I have reaped that I have never sown, and sown that I have never reaped! Always, I shall think it one of the proudest and happiest circumstances of my life that enables me to subscribe myself your faithful and affectionate friend, W. S."

Three months later, he thus communicates the result of the experiment:—

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*

"Jan. 30th, 1810.

"My Dear Miss Baillie,

"You have only to imagine all that you could wish to give success to a play, and your conceptions will still fall short of the complete and decided triumph of the Family Legend. The house was

* *Winter's Tale, Act I. Scene 2.*

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crowded to a most extraordinary degree; many people had come from your native capital of the west; everything that pretended to distinction, whether from rank or literature, was in the boxes, and in the pit such an aggregate mass of humanity as I have seldom if ever witnessed in the same space. It was quite obvious from the beginning, that the cause was to be very fairly tried before the public, and that if anything went wrong, no effort, even of your numerous and zealous friends, could have had much influence in guiding or restraining the general feeling. Some good-natured persons had been kind enough to propagate reports of a strong opposition, which, though I considered them as totally groundless, did not by any means lessen the extreme anxiety with which I waited the rise of the curtain. But in a short time I saw there was no ground whatever for apprehension, and yet I sat the whole time shaking for fear a scene-shifter, or a carpenter, or some of the subaltern actors, should make some blunder, and interrupt the feeling of deep and general interest which soon seized on the whole pit, box, and gallery, as Mr Bayes has it.* The scene on the rock struck the utmost possible effect into the audience, and you heard nothing but sobs on all sides. The banquet-scene was equally impressive, and so was the combat. Of the greater scenes, that

* See the Rehearsal.

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between Lorn and Helen in the castle of Maclean, that between Helen and her lover, and the examination of Maclean himself in Argyle's castle, were applauded to the very echo. Siddons announced the play '*for the rest of the week*,' which was received not only with a thunder of applause, but with cheering and throwing up of hats and handkerchiefs. Mrs Siddons supported her part incomparably, although just recovered from the indisposition mentioned in my last. Siddons himself played Lorn very well indeed, and moved and looked with great spirit. A Mr Terry, who promises to be a fine performer, went through the part of the Old Earl with great taste and effect. For the rest I cannot say much, excepting that from highest to lowest they were most accurately perfect in their parts, and did their very best. Malcolm de Gray was tolerable but *stickish* — Maclean came off decently — but the conspirators were sad hounds. You are, my dear Miss Baillie, too much of a democrat in your writings; you allow life, soul, and spirit to these inferior creatures of the drama, and expect they will be the better of it. Now it was obvious to me, that the poor monsters, whose mouths are only of use to spout the vapid blank verse which your modern playwright puts into the part of the confidant and subaltern villain of his piece, did not know what to make of the energetic and poetical diction which

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even these subordinate departments abound with in the Legend. As the play greatly exceeded the usual length (lasting till half-past ten), we intend, when it is repeated to-night, to omit some of the passages where the weight necessarily fell on the weakest of our host, although we may hereby injure the detail of the plot. The scenery was very good, and the rock, without appearance of pantomime, was so contrived as to place Mrs Siddons in a very precarious situation to all appearance. The dresses were more tawdry than I should have judged proper, but expensive and showy. I got my brother John's Highland recruiting party to reinforce the garrison of Inverary, and as they mustered beneath the porch of the castle, and seemed to fill the court-yard behind, the combat scene had really the appearance of reality. Siddons has been most attentive, anxious, assiduous, and docile, and had drilled his troops so well that the prompter's aid was unnecessary, and I do not believe he gave a single hint the whole night; nor were there any false or ridiculous accents or gestures even among the underlings, though God knows they fell often far short of the true spirit. Mrs Siddons spoke the epilogue* extremely well: the prologue,† which I will send you in its revised state, was also very well received. Mrs Scott sends her kindest

* Written by Henry Mackenzie.

† See Scott's *Poetical Works*, vol. viii. p. 387.

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compliments of congratulation; she had a party of thirty friends in one small box, which she was obliged to watch like a clucking hen till she had gathered her whole flock, for the crowd was insufferable. I am going to see the Legend to-night, when I shall enjoy it quietly, for last night I was so much interested in its reception that I cannot say I was at leisure to attend to the feelings arising from the representation itself. People are dying to read it. If you think of suffering a single edition to be printed to gratify their curiosity, I will take care of it. But I do not advise this, because until printed no other theatres can have it before you give leave. My kind respects attend Miss Agnes Baillie, and believe me ever your obliged and faithful servant,

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S. — A friend of mine writes dramatic criticism now and then. I have begged him to send me a copy of the Edinburgh paper in which he inserts his lucubrations, and I will transmit it to you: he is a play-going man, and more in the habit of expressing himself on such subjects than most people. — In case you have not got a playbill, I enclose one, because I think in my own case I should like to see it."

The Family Legend had a continuous run of

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fourteen nights, and was soon afterwards printed and published by the Ballantynes.

The theatrical critic alluded to in the last of these letters was the elder of those brothers; the newspaper in which his lucubrations then appeared was the *Edinburgh Evening Courant;* and so it continued until 1817, when the *Edinburgh Weekly Journal* was purchased by the two partners of the Canongate; ever after which period it was edited by the prominent member of that firm, and from time to time was the vehicle of many fugitive pieces by Scott.

In one of these letters there occurs, for the first time, the name of a person who soon obtained a large share of Scott's regard and confidence — the late ingenious comedian, Mr Daniel Terry. He had received a good education, and been regularly trained as an architect; but abandoned that profession, at an early period of life, for the stage, and was now beginning to attract attention as a valuable and efficient actor in Henry Siddons's new company at Edinburgh. Already he and the Ballantynes were constant companions, and through his familiarity with them, Scott had abundant opportunities of appreciating his many excellent and agreeable qualities. He had the manners and feelings of a gentleman. Like John Kemble, he was deeply skilled in the old literature of the drama, and he rivalled

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Scott's own enthusiasm for the antiquities of *vertu*. Their epistolary correspondence in after days was frequent, and will supply me with many illustrations of Scott's minor tastes and habits. As their letters lie before me, they appear as if they had all been penned by the same hand. Terry's idolatry of his new friend induced him to imitate his writing so zealously, that Scott used to say, if he were called on to swear to any document, the utmost he could venture to attest would be, that it was either in his own hand or in Terry's. The actor, perhaps unconsciously, mimicked him in other matters with hardly inferior pertinacity. His small lively features had acquired, before I knew him, a truly ludicrous cast of Scott's graver expression; he had taught his tiny eyebrow the very trick of the poet's meditative frown; and to crown all, he so habitually affected his tone and accent, that, though a native of Bath, a stranger could hardly have doubted he must be a Scotchman. These things afforded Scott and all their mutual acquaintances much diversion; but perhaps no Stoic could have helped being secretly gratified by seeing a clever and sensible man convert himself into a living type and symbol of admiration.

Charles Mathews and Terry were once thrown out of a gig together, and the former received an injury which made him halt ever afterwards, while

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the latter escaped unhurt. "Dooms, *Dauniel*," said Mathews when they next met, "what a pity that it wasna your luck to get the game leg, mon! Your *Shirra* wad hae been the very thing, ye ken, an' ye wad hae been croose till ye war coffined!" Terry, though he did not always relish bantering on this subject, replied readily and good-humouredly by a quotation from Peter Pindar's *Bozzy and Piozzi*:—

> "When Foote his leg by some misfortune broke,
> Says I to Johnson, all by way of joke,
> Sam, sir, in Paragraph will soon be clever,
> He'll take off Peter better now than ever."

Mathews's mirthful caricature of Terry's sober mimicry of Scott was one of the richest extravaganzas of his social hours; but indeed I have often seen this Proteus dramatize the whole Ballantyne group with equal success—while Rigdumfunnidos screamed with delight, and Aldiborontiphoscophornio faintly chuckled, and the Sheriff, gently smiling, pushed round his decanters.*

* By the way, perhaps the very richest article in Mathews's social budget, was the scene alleged to have occurred when he himself communicated to the two Ballantynes the new titles which the Sheriff had conferred on them. Rigdum's satisfaction with his own cap and bells, and the other's indignant incredulity, passing by degrees into tragical horror, made a delicious contrast. [1839.]

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Miss Seward died in March 1809. She bequeathed her poetry to Scott, with an injunction to publish it speedily, and prefix a sketch of her life; while she made her letters (of which she had kept copies) the property of Mr Constable, in the assurance that due regard for his own interests would forthwith place the whole collection before the admiring world. Scott superintended accordingly the edition of the lady's verses, which was published in three volumes in August 1810, by John Ballantyne and Co.; and Constable lost no time in announcing her correspondence, which appeared a year later, in six volumes. The following letter alludes to these productions, as well as a comedy by Mr Henry Siddons, which he had recently brought out on the Edinburgh stage; and lastly, to the Lady of the Lake, the printing of which had by this time made great progress.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"Edinburgh, March 18, 1810.

"Nothing, my dear Miss Baillie, can loiter in my hands, when you are commanding officer. I have put the play in progress through the press, and find my publishers, the Ballantynes, had previously determined to make Mr Longman, the proprietor of your other works, the offer of this. All that can be made

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of it in such a cause certainly shall, and the booksellers shall be content with as little profit as can in reason be expected. I understand the trade well, and will take care of this. Indeed, I believe the honour weighs more with the booksellers here than the profit of a single play. So much for business. You are quite right in the risk I run of failure in a third poem; yet I think I understand the British public well enough to set every sail towards the popular breeze. One set of folks pique themselves upon sailing in the wind's eye—another class drive right before it; now I would neither do one or t'other, but endeavour to go, as the sailors express it, *upon* a wind, and make use of it to carry me my own way, instead of going precisely in its direction; or, to speak in a dialect with which I am more familiar, I would endeavour to make my horse carry me, instead of attempting to carry my horse. I have a vain-glorious presentiment of success upon this occasion, which may very well deceive me, but which I would hardly confess to anybody but you, nor perhaps to you neither, unless I knew you would find it out whether I told it you or no,—

> 'You are a sharp observer, and you look
> Quite through the eyes of men.'—

"I plead guilty to the charge of ill-breeding to Miss **** The despair which I used to feel on

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receiving poor Miss Seward's letters, whom I really liked, gave me a most unsentimental horror for sentimental letters. The crossest thing I ever did in my life was to poor dear Miss Seward; she wrote me in an evil hour (I had never seen her, mark that!) a long and most passionate epistle upon the death of a dear friend, whom I had never seen neither, concluding with a charge not to attempt answering the said letter, for she was dead to the world, &c. &c. &c. Never were commands more literally obeyed. I remained as silent as the grave, till the lady made so many enquiries after me, that I was afraid of my death being prematurely announced by a sonnet or an elegy. When I did see her, however, she interested me very much, and I am now doing penance for my ill-breeding, by submitting to edit her posthumous poetry, most of which is absolutely execrable. This, however, is the least of my evils, for when she proposed this bequest to me, which I could not in decency refuse, she combined it with a request that I would publish her whole literary correspondence. This I declined on principle, having a particular aversion at perpetuating that sort of gossip; but what availed it? Lo! to ensure the publication, she left it to an Edinburgh bookseller; and I anticipate the horror of seeing myself advertised for a live poet like a wild beast on a painted streamer, for I understand all her friends are depicted therein in body,

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mind, and manners. So much for the risks of sentimental correspondence.

"Siddons' play was truly flat, but not unprofitable; he contrived to get it well propped in the acting, and—though it was such a thing as if you or I had written it (supposing, that is, what in your case, and I think even in my own, is impossible) would have been damned seventy-fold,—yet it went through with applause. Such is the humour of the multitude; and they will quarrel with venison for being dressed a day sooner than fashion requires, and batten on a neck of mutton, because, on the whole, it is rather better than they expected; however, Siddons is a good lad, and deserves success, through whatever channel it comes. His mother is here just now. I was quite shocked to see her, for the two last years have made a dreadful inroad both on voice and person; she has, however, a very bad cold. I hope she will be able to act Jane de Montfort, which we have long planned. Very truly yours,

W. S."

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CHAPTER XX.

Affair of Thomas Scott's Extractorship discussed in the House of Lords — Speeches of Lord Lauderdale, Lord Melville, &c. — Lord Holland at the Friday Club — Publication of The Lady of the Lake — Correspondence concerning Versification with Ellis and Canning — The Poem criticised by Jeffrey and Mackintosh — Letters to Southey and Morritt — Anecdotes from James Ballantyne's Memoranda.

1810.

THERE occurred, while the latter cantos of the Lady of the Lake were advancing through the press, an affair which gave Scott so much uneasiness, that I must not pass it in silence. Each Clerk of Session had in those days the charge of a particular *office* or department in the Great Register House of Scotland, and the appointment of the subalterns, whc

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therein recorded and extracted the decrees of the Supreme Court, was in his hands. Some of these situations, remunerated, according to a fixed rate of fees, by the parties concerned in the suits before the Court, were valuable, and considered not at all below the pretensions of gentlemen who had been regularly trained for the higher branches of the law. About the time when Thomas Scott's affairs as a Writer to the Signet fell into derangement, but before they were yet hopeless, a post became vacant in his brother's *office*, which yielded an average income of £400, and which he would very willingly have accepted. The poet, however, considered a respectable man, who had grown grey at an inferior desk in the same department, as entitled to promotion, and exerted the right of patronage in his favour accordingly, bestowing on his brother the place which this person left. It was worth about £250 a-year, and its duties being entirely mechanical, might be in great part, and often had been in former times entirely, discharged by deputy. Mr Thomas Scott's appointment to this *Extractorship* took place at an early stage of the proceedings of that Commission for enquiring into the Scotch System of Judicature, which had the poet for its secretary. Thomas, very soon afterwards, was compelled to withdraw from Edinburgh, and retired, as has been mentioned, to the Isle of Man, leaving his official duties to the care

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of a substitute, who was to allow him a certain share of the fees, until circumstances should permit his return. It was not, however, found so easy, as he and his friends had anticipated, to wind up his accounts, and settle with his creditors. Time passed on, and being an active man, in the prime vigour of life, he accepted a commission in the Manx Fencibles, a new corps raised by the Lord of that island, the Duke of Athol, who willingly availed himself of the military experience which Mr Scott had acquired in the course of his long connexion with the Edinburgh Volunteers. These Manx Fencibles, however, were soon dissolved, and Thomas Scott, now engaged in the peaceful occupation of collecting materials for a History of the Isle of Man, to which his brother had strongly directed his views, was anxiously expecting a final arrangement, which might allow him to re-establish himself in Edinburgh, and resume his seat in the Register House, when he received the intelligence that the Commission of Judicature had resolved to abolish that, among many other similar posts. This was a severe blow; but it was announced, at the same time, that the Commission meant to recommend to Parliament a scheme of compensation for the functionaries who were to be discharged at their suggestion, and that his retired allowance would probably amount to £130 per annum.

In the spring of 1810, the Commission gave in

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its report, and was dissolved; and a bill, embodying the details of an extensive reform, founded on its suggestions, was laid before the House of Commons, who adopted most of its provisions, and among others passed, without hesitation, the clauses respecting compensation for the holders of abolished offices. But when the bill reached the House of Lords, several of these clauses were severely reprobated by some Peers of the Whig party, and the case of Thomas Scott, in particular, was represented as a gross and flagrant *job*. The following extract from Hansard's Debates will save me the trouble of further details:—

"THOMAS SCOTT.

"THE EARL OF LAUDERDALE moved an amendment, 'That those only be remunerated who were mentioned in the schedule.' The application of this amendment was towards the compensation intended for Mr Thomas Scott, the brother of Walter Scott. It appeared the former was appointed to the office of an Extractor at a time when it must have been foreseen that those offices would be abolished. Mr Thomas Scott had not been connected previously with that sort of situation, but was recruiting for the Manx Fencibles in the Isle of Man at the time, and had not served the office, but performed its duties through the means of a deputy. He considered this transaction a perfect job. By the present bil' Mr T. Scott would have £130 for life as an indemnity for ar office, the duties of which he never had performed, while those

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clerks who had laboured for twenty years had no adequate remuneration.

"Viscount Melville supported the general provisions of the bill. With respect to Mr T. Scott, he certainly had been in business, had met with misfortunes, and on account of his circumstances went to the Isle of Man; but with respect to his appointment, this was the fact; a situation in the same office [of the Register House] with that of his brother, of £400, became vacant, and he [Walter Scott] thought it his duty to promote a person who had meritoriously filled the situation which was afterwards granted to Mr T. Scott. His brother was therefore so disinterested as to have appointed him to the inferior instead of the superior situation. The noble viscount saw no injustice in the case, and there was no partiality but what was excusable.

"Lord Holland thought no man who knew him would suspect that he was unfavourable to men of literature; on the contrary, he felt a great esteem for the literary character of Walter Scott. He and his colleagues ever thought it their duty to reward literary merit without regard to political opinions; and he wished he could pay the same compliment to the noble and learned viscount, for he must ever recollect that the poet Burns, of immortal memory, had been shamefully neglected. But with respect to Mr Thomas Scott, the question was quite different, for he was placed in a situation which he and his brother knew at the time would be abolished; and from Parliament he claimed an indemnity for what could not be pronounced any loss. It was unjust as regarded others, and improper as it respected Parliament.

"The amendment was then proposed and negatived. The bill was accordingly read the third time and passed."—Hansard, *June* 1810

I shall now extract various passages from Scott's letters to his brother and other friends, which will

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show what his feelings were while this affair continued under agitation.

"*To Thomas Scott, Esq., Douglas, Isle of Man.*

"Edinburgh, 25th May 1810.

"My Dear Tom,

"I write under some anxiety for your interest, though I sincerely hope it is groundless. The devil or James Gibson* has put it into Lord Lauderdale's head to challenge your annuity in the House of Lords on account of your non-residence, and your holding a commission in the militia. His lordship kept his intention as secret as possible, but fortunately it reached the kind and friendly ear of Colin Mackenzie. Lord Melville takes the matter up stoutly, and I have little doubt will carry his point, unless the whole bill is given up for the season, which some concurring opposition from different quarters renders not impossible. In that case, you must, at the expense of a little cash and time, shew face in Edinburgh for a week or two, and attend your office. But I devoutly hope all will be settled by the bill

* James Gibson, Esq. W.S. (now Sir James Gibson-Craig of Riccarton, Bart.) had always been regarded as one of the most able and active of the Scotch Whigs—whose acknowledged chief in those days was the Earl of Lauderdale.

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being passed as it now stands. This is truly a most unworthy exertion of private spite and malice, but I trust it will be in vain."

. . . . . .

"Edinburgh, June 12th.

"Dear Tom,

"I have the pleasure to acquaint you that I have every reason to believe that the bill will pass this week. It has been *committed;* upon which occasion Lord Lauderdale stated various objections, all of which were repelled. He then adverted to your case with some sufficiently bitter observations. Lord Melville advised him to reserve his epithets till he was pleased to state his cause, as he would pledge himself to show that they were totally inapplicable to the transaction. The Duke of Montrose also intimated his intention to defend it, which I take very kind of his Grace, as he went down on purpose, and declared his resolution to attend whenever the business should be stirred. So much for

'The Lord of Graham, by every chief adored,
Who boasts his native philabeg restored.'" *

. . . .

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* These lines are slightly altered from the Rolliad, p. 308. The Duke had obtained the repeal of an act of Parliament forbidding the use of the Highland garb.

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" Edinburgh, 21st June 1810.

" My Dear Tom,

" The bill was read a third time in the House of Lords, on which occasion Lord Lauderdale made his attack, which Lord Melville answered. There was not much said on either side: Lord Holland supported Lord Lauderdale, and the bill passed without a division. So you have fairly doubled Cape Lauderdale. I believe his principal view was to insult my feelings, in which he has been very unsuccessful, for I thank God I feel nothing but the most hearty contempt both for the attack and the sort of paltry malice by which alone it could be dictated."

The next letter is addressed to an old friend of Scott's, who, though a stout Whig, had taken a lively interest in the success of his brother's parliamentary business:—

" *To John Richardson, Esq., Fludyer Street, Westminster.*

" Edinburgh, 3d July 1810.

" My Dear Richardson,

" I ought before now to have written you my particular thanks for your kind attention to the in-

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terest which I came so strangely and unexpectedly to have in the passing of the Judicature Bill. The only purpose which I suppose Lord Lauderdale had in view was to state charges which could neither be understood nor refuted, and to give me a little pain by dragging my brother's misfortunes into public notice. If the last was his aim, I am happy to say it has most absolutely miscarried, for I have too much contempt for the motive which dictated his Lordship's eloquence, to feel much for its thunders. My brother loses by the bill from £150 to £200, which no power short of an act of Parliament could have taken from him, and far from having a view to the compensation, he is a considerable loser by its being substituted for the actual receipts of his office. I assure you I am very sensible of your kind and friendly activity and zeal in my brother's behalf.

"I received the Guerras* safe; it is a fine copy, and I think very cheap, considering how difficult it is now to procure foreign books. I shall be delighted to have the Traité des Tournois. I propose, on the 12th, setting forth for the West Highlands, with the desperate purpose of investigating the caves of Staffa, Egg, and Skye. There was a time when this was a heroic undertaking, and when the return of Samuel Johnson from achieving it was hailed by the Edin-

* A copy of the *Guerras Civiles de Granada.*

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burgh literati with 'per varios casus,' and other scraps of classical gratulation equally new and elegant. But the harvest of glory has been entirely reaped by the early discoverers; and in an age when every London citizen makes Lochlomond his wash-pot, and throws his shoe over Ben-Nevis, a man may endure every hardship, and expose himself to every danger of the Highland seas, from sea-sickness to the jaws of the great sea-snake, without gaining a single leaf of laurel for his pains.

"The best apology for bestowing all this tediousness upon you is, that John Burnet is dinning into the ears of the Court a botheration about the politics of the magnificent city of Culross. But I will release you sooner than I fear I shall escape myself, with the assurance that I am ever yours most truly,

WALTER SCOTT."

I conclude the affair of Thomas Scott with a brief extract from a letter which his brother addressed to him a few weeks later: — "Lord Holland has been in Edinburgh, and we met accidentally at a public party. He made up to me, but I remembered his part in your affair, and *cut* him with as little remorse as an old pen." The meeting here alluded to occurred at a dinner of the *Friday Club*, at Fortune's Tavern, to which Lord Holland was introduced by Mr Thomas Thomson. Two gentlemen who were present,

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inform me that they distinctly remember a very painful scene, for which, knowing Scott's habitual good-nature and urbanity, they had been wholly unprepared. One of them (Lord Jeffrey) adds, that this was the only example of rudeness he ever witnessed in him in the course of a lifelong familiarity. I have thought it due to truth and justice not to omit this disagreeable passage in Scott's life, which shows how even his mind could at times be unhinged and perverted by the malign influence of political spleen. It is consolatory to add, that he enjoyed much agreeable intercourse in after days with Lord Holland, and retained no feelings of resentment towards any other of the Whig gentlemen named in the preceding correspondence.*

* I subjoin a list of the Members of *The Friday Club*, which was instituted in June 1803 (on the model, I believe, of Johnson's at the Turk's Head), down to the period of Scott's death. The others marked, like his name, by an asterisk, are also dead.

1803 *Sir James Hall
*Professor Dugald Stewart
*Professor John Playfair
Rev. Arch. Alison
Rev. Sydney Smith
*Rev. Peter Elmslie
*Alex. Irving (Lord Newton)
*Wm. Erskine (Lord Kinnedder)
George Cranstoun (Lord Corehouse)
*Walter Scott
Thomas Thomson
Dr John Thomson
John A. Murray (Lord Advocate in 1835)
Henry Brougham (Lord Brougham)
*Henry Mackenzie

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While these affairs were still in progress, the poem of the Lady of the Lake was completed. Scott was at the same time arranging the materials, and superintending the printing, of the collection entitled "English Minstrelsy," in which several of his own minor poems first appeared, and which John Ballantyne and Co. also published in the summer of 1810. The Swift, too (to say nothing of reviews and the like), was going on; and so was the Somers. A new edition of the Minstrelsy of the Scottish

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1803 H. Mackenzie (Lord Mackenzie)
*Malcolm Laing
Henry Cockburn (Lord Cockburn)
John Richardson
Francis Jeffrey (Lord Jeffrey)
William Clerk
1804*Alex. Hamilton
*Dr Coventry
*Professor John Robison
George Strickland
*Professor Dalzell
*Lord Webb Seymour
*Earl of Selkirk
*Lord Glenbervie
1807 Rev. John Thomson
1810 John Jeffrey
1811 T. F. Kennedy
J. Fullerton (Lord Fullerton)
John Allen
*Francis Horner
Thomas Campbell
1812*George Wilson
1814*Dr John Gordon
1816 Andrew Rutherford
1817*James Keay
1825 Leonard Horner
Professor Pillans
1826 Count M. de Flahault
*D. Cathcart (Lord Alloway)
1827 Earl of Minto
William Murray
1830 Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone

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Border was moreover at press, and in it the editor included a few features of novelty, particularly Mr Morritt's spirited ballad of the *Curse of Moy*. He gives a lively description of his occupations, in the following letter addressed to that gentleman:—

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., 24 Portland Place, London.*

"Edinburgh, 2d March 1810.

"My Dear Morritt,

"You are very good to remember such a false knave as I am, who have omitted so long to thank you for a letter, bringing me the assurances of your health and remembrance, which I do not value the less deeply and sincerely for my seeming neglect. Truth is, I do not eat the bread of idleness. But I was born a Scotchman, and a bare one, and was therefore born to fight my way with my left hand where my right failed me, and with my teeth, if they were both cut off. This is but a bad apology for not answering your kindness, yet not so bad when you consider that it was only admitted as a cause of procrastination, and that I have been — let me see — I have been Secretary to the Judicature Commission, which sat daily during all the Christmas vacation I have been editing Swift, and correcting the press,

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at the rate of six sheets a-week. I have been editing Somers at the rate of four ditto ditto. I have written reviews — I have written songs — I have made selections — I have superintended rehearsals — and all this independent of visiting, and of my official duty, which occupies me four hours every working day except Mondays — and independent of a new poem with which I am threatening the world. This last employment is not the most prudent, but I really cannot well help myself. My office, though a very good one for Scotland, is only held in reversion; nor do I at present derive a shilling from it. I must expect that a fresh favourite of the public will supersede me, and my philosophy being very great on the point of poetical fame, I would fain, at the risk of hastening my own downfall, avail myself of the favourable moment to make some further provision for my little people. Moreover, I cannot otherwise honestly indulge myself in some of the luxuries which, when long gratified, become a sort of pseudo necessaries. As for the terrible parodies* which have come forth, I can only say with Benedict, 'A college of such witmongers cannot flout me out of my humour.' Had I been conscious of one place about my temper, were it even, metaphorically speak-

* I suppose this is an allusion to "The Lay of the Scotch Fiddle," "The Goblin Groom," and some other productions, like them, long since forgotten.

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ing, the tip of my heel, vulnerable to this sort of aggression, I have that respect for mine own ease, that I would have shunned being a candidate for public applause, as I would avoid snatching a honeycomb from among a hive of live bees. My present attempt is a poem, partly Highland—the scene Loch Katrine, *tempore Jacobi quinti*. If I fail, as Lady Macbeth gallantly says, I fail, and there is only a story murdered to no purpose; and if I succeed, why then, as the song says—

> 'Up with the bonnie blue bonnet,
> The dirk and the feather and a'.'

"I hope to show this ditty to you soon in Portland Place, for it seems determined I must go to London, though the time is not fixed. The pleasure of meeting you and half a dozen other friends, reconciles me to this change of plan, for had I answered your letter the day I received it, I would have said nothing was less likely than my going to town in spring. I hope it will be so late as to afford me an opportunity of visiting Rokeby and Greta Side on my return. The *felon sow* herself could not think of them with more affection than I do; and though I love Portland Place dearly, yet I would fain enjoy both. But this must be as *the Fates and Destinies and Sisters three* determine. Charlotte hopes to accompany me, and is particularly gratified by the

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expectation of meeting Mrs Morritt. We think of our sunny days at Rokeby with equal delight.

"Miss Baillie's play went off capitally here, notwithstanding her fond and over-credulous belief in a Creator of the world. The fact is so generally believed that it is man who makes the deity, that I am surprised it has never been maintained as a corollary, that the knife and fork make the fingers. We wept till our hearts were sore, and applauded till our hands were blistered—what could we more—and this in crowded theatres.

"I send a copy of the poetical collection, not for you, my good friend, because you would not pay your literary subscription,* but for Mrs Morritt. I thought of leaving it as I came through Yorkshire, but as I can get *as yet* an office frank, it will be safer in your charge. By a parity of reasoning, you will receive a copy of the new edition of the Minstrelsy just finished, and about to be shipped, enriched with your Curse of Moy, which is very much admired by all to whom I have shown it. I am sorry that dear —— —— is so far from you. There is something about her that makes me think of her with a mixture of affection and anxiety—such a pure and excellent heart, joined to such native and

* Scott alludes to some translations of Italian poetry which he had wished for Mr Morritt's permission to publish in the "English Minstrelsy."

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fascinating manners, cannot pass unprotected through your fashionable scenes without much hazard of a twinge at least, if not a stab. I remember we talked over this subject once while riding on the banks of Tees, and somehow (I cannot tell why) it falls like a death-bell on my ear. She is too artless for the people that she has to live amongst. This is all vile croaking, so I will end it by begging ten times love and compliments to Mrs Morritt, in which Charlotte heartily joins. Believe me ever, Dear Morritt, yours most faithfully,

WALTER SCOTT."

Early in May the Lady of the Lake came out — as her two elder sisters had done — in all the majesty of quarto, with every accompanying grace of typography, and with, moreover, an engraved frontispiece of Saxon's portrait of Scott; the price of the book, two guineas. For the copyright the poet had nominally received 2000 guineas, but as John Ballantyne and Co. retained three-fourths of the property to themselves (Miller of London purchasing the other fourth), the author's profits were, or should have been, more than this.

It ought to be mentioned, that during the progress of the poem his feelings towards Constable were so much softened, that he authorized John Ballantyne to ask, in his name, that experienced bookseller's

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advice respecting the amount of the first impression, the method of advertising, and other professional details. Mr Constable readily gave the assistance thus requested, and would willingly have taken any share they pleased in the adventure. The property had been disposed of before these communications occurred, and the triumphant success of the *coup d'essai* of the new firm was sufficient to close Scott's ears for a season against any propositions of the like kind from the house at the Cross; but from this time there was no return of anything like personal ill-will between the parties. One article of this correspondence will be sufficient.

"*To Mr Constable.*

"Castle Street, 13th March 1810.

"Dear Sir,

"I am sure if Mr Hunter is really sorry for the occasion of my long absence from your shop, I shall be happy to forget all disagreeable circumstances, and visit it often as a customer and amateur. I think it necessary to add (before departing from this subject, and I hope for ever), that it is not in my power to restore our relative situation as author and publishers, because, upon the breach between us, a large capital was diverted by the Ballantynes from

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another object, and invested in their present bookselling concern, under an express assurance from me of such support as my future publications could give them; which is a pledge not to be withdrawn without grounds which I cannot anticipate. But this is not a consideration which need prevent our being friends and well-wishers. Yours truly,

W. SCOTT."

Mr Robert Cadell, the publisher of this Memoir, who was then a young man in training for his profession in Edinburgh, retains a strong impression of the interest which the Lady of the Lake excited there for two or three months before it was on the counter. "James Ballantyne," he says, "read the cantos from time to time to select coteries, as they advanced at press. Common fame was loud in their favour; a great poem was on all hands anticipated. I do not recollect that any of all the author's works was ever looked for with more intense anxiety, or that any one of them excited a more extraordinary sensation when it did appear. The whole country rang with the praises of the poet—crowds set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively unknown; and as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighbourhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors. It is a well-ascertained

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fact, that from the date of the publication of the Lady of the Lake, the post-horse duty in Scotland rose in an extraordinary degree, and indeed it continued to do so regularly for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for our scenery which he had thus originally created."

I owe to the same correspondent the following details:—"The quarto edition of 2050 copies disappeared instantly, and was followed in the course of the same year by four editions in octavo, viz. one of 3000, a second of 3250, and a third and a fourth each of 6000 copies; thus, in the space of a few months, the extraordinary number of 20,000 copies were disposed of. In the next year (1811) there was another edition of 3000; there was one of 2000 in 1814; another of 2000 in 1815; one of 2000 again in 1819; and two, making between them 2500, appeared in 1825: Since which time the Lady of the Lake, in collective editions of his poetry, and in separate issues, must have circulated to the extent of at least 20,000 copies more." So that, down to the month of July 1836, the legitimate sale in Great Britain has been not less than 50,000 copies.

I have little to add to what the Introduction of 1830, and some letters already extracted, have told us concerning the history of the composition of this poem. Indeed the coincidences of expression and

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illustration in the Introduction, and those private letters written twenty years before, are remarkable. In both we find him quoting Montrose's lines, and in both he quotes also "Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet," &c. In truth, both letters and Introduction were literal transcripts of his usual conversation on the subject. "A lady," he says, "to whom I was nearly related, and with whom I lived during her whole life on the most brotherly terms of affection, was residing with me (at Ashestiel) when the work was in progress, and used to ask me what I could possibly do to rise so early in the morning. At last I told her the subject of my meditations; and I can never forget the anxiety and affection expressed in her reply. 'Do not be so rash,' she said, 'my dearest cousin. You are already popular—more so perhaps than you yourself will believe, or than even I or other partial friends can fairly allow to your merit. You stand high—do not rashly attempt to climb higher and incur the risk of a fall; for, depend upon it, a favourite will not be permitted even to stumble with impunity.' I replied to this affectionate expostulation in the words of Montrose:—

'He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all.

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'If I fail,' I said—for the dialogue is strong in my recollection, 'it is a sign that I ought never to have succeeded, and *I will write prose for life:* you shall see no change in my temper, nor will I eat a single meal the worse. But if I succeed—

'Up wi' the bonnie blue bonnet,
The dirk and the feather an' a'!'

"Afterwards I showed my critic the first canto, which reconciled her to my imprudence."—The lady here alluded to was no doubt Miss Christian Rutherford, his mother's sister, who, as I have already mentioned, was so little above his age, that they seem always to have lived together on the terms of equality indicated in her use of the word "cousin" in the dialogue before us. She was, however, about as devout a Shakspearian as her nephew, and the use of *cousin*, for kinsman in general, is common to all our elder dramatists.*

He says, in the same essay, "I remember that about the same time a friend started in to 'heeze up my hope,' like the minstrel in the old song. He was bred a farmer, but a man of powerful understanding, natural good taste, and warm poetical feeling, perfectly competent to supply the wants of

* Thus Lady Capulet exclaims, on seeing the corpse of Tybalt,—

"Tybalt, my cousin!—O my brother's child!"

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an imperfect or irregular education. He was a passionate admirer of field sports, which we often pursued together. As this friend happened to dine with me at Ashestiel one day, I took the opportunity of reading to him the first canto of the Lady of the Lake, in order to ascertain the effect the poem was likely to produce upon a person who was but too favourable a representative of readers at large. His reception of my recitation, or prelection, was rather singular. He placed his hand across his brow, and listened with great attention through the whole account of the stag-hunt, till the dogs throw themselves into the lake to follow their master, who embarks with Ellen Douglas. He then started up with a sudden exclamation, struck his hand on the table, and declared, in a voice of censure calculated for the occasion, that the dogs must have been totally ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase. I own I was much encouraged by the species of reverie which had possessed so zealous a follower of the sports of the ancient Nimrod, who had been completely surprised out of all doubts of the reality of the tale." Scott adds — " Another of his remarks gave me less pleasure. He detected the identity of the king with the wandering knight, Fitz-James, when he winds his bugle to summon his attendants. He was probably thinking of the lively but somewhat licentious old

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ballad in which the *dénouement* of a royal intrigue" [one of James V. himself by the way] " takes place as follows:—

'He took a bugle from his side,
He blew both loud and shrill,
And four-and-twenty belted knights
Came skipping owre the hill.

'Then he took out a little knife,
Let a' his duddies fa',
And he was the bravest gentleman
That was amang them a'.
And we'll go no more a roving,' &c.

" This discovery, as Mr Pepys says of the rent in his camlet cloak, 'was but a trifle, yet it troubled me;' and I was at a good deal of pains to efface any marks by which I thought my secret could be traced before the conclusion, when I relied on it with the same hope of producing effect with which the Irish postboy is said to reserve a 'trot for the avenue.'"*

I believe the shrewd critic here introduced was the poet's excellent cousin, Charles Scott, now laird of Knowe-south. The story of the Irish postilion's trot he owed to Mr Moore.

In their reception of this poem, the critics were

* Introduction to the Lady of the Lake — 1830.

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for once in full harmony with each other, and with the popular voice. The article in the Quarterly was written by George Ellis; but its eulogies, though less discriminative, are not a whit more emphatic than those of Mr Jeffrey in the rival Review. Indeed, I have always considered this last paper as the best specimen of contemporary criticism on Scott's poetry; and I shall therefore indulge myself with quoting here two of its paragraphs:—

"There is nothing in Mr Scott of the severe and majestic style of Milton — or of the terse and fine composition of Pope — or of the elaborate elegance and melody of Campbell — or even of the flowing and redundant diction of Southey,—but there is a medley of bright and glowing images, set carelesaly and loosely together — a diction tinged successively with the careless richness of Shakspeare, the harshness and antique simplicity of the old romances, the homeliness of vulgar ballads and anecdotes, and the sentimental glitter of the most modern poetry — passing from the borders of the ludicrous to those of the sublime — alternately minute and energetic — sometimes artificial, and frequently negligent, but always full of spirit and vivacity — abounding in images that are striking at first sight to minds of every contexture — and never expressing a sentiment which it can cost the most ordinary reader any exertion to comprehend. Upon the whole, we are inclined to think more highly of the Lady of the Lake than of either of its author's former publications. We are more sure, however, that it has fewer faults than that it has greater beauties; and as its beauties bear a strong resemblance to those with which the public has been already made familiar in these celebrated works, we should not be surprised if its popularity were less splendid and remarkable. For our own parts, however, we are of opinion,

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that it will be oftener read hereafter than either of them; and that if it had appeared first in the series, their reception would have been less favourable than that which it has experienced.' It is more polished in its diction, and more regular in its versification; the story is constructed with infinitely more skill and address; there is a greater proportion of pleasing and tender passages, with much less antiquarian detail: and, upon the whole, a larger variety of characters, more artfully and judiciously contrasted. There is nothing so fine, perhaps, as the battle in Marmion — or so picturesque as some of the scattered sketches in the Lay; but there is a richness and a spirit in the whole piece, which does not pervade either of those poems—a profusion of incident, and a shifting brilliancy of colouring, that reminds us of the witchery of Ariosto — and a constant elasticity, and occasional energy, which seem to belong more peculiarly to the author now before us."

"It is honourable to Mr Scott's genius that he has been able to interest the public so deeply with this third presentment of the same chivalrous scenes; but we cannot help thinking, that both his glory and our gratification would have been greater, if he had changed his hand more completely, and actually given us a true Celtic story, with all its drapery and accompaniments, in a corresponding style of decoration. Such a subject, we are persuaded, has very great capabilities, and only wants to be introduced to public notice by such a hand as Mr Scott's, to make a still more powerful impression than he has already effected by the resurrection of the tales of romance. There are few persons, we believe, of any degree of poetical susceptibility, who have wandered among the secluded valleys of the Highlands, and contemplated the singular people by whom they are still tenanted — with their love of music and of song — their hardy and irregular life, so unlike the unvarying toils of the Saxon mechanic — their devotion to their chiefs — their wild and lofty traditions — their national enthusiasm—the melancholy grandeur of the scenes they

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inhabit—and the multiplied superstitions which still linger among them — without feeling that there is no existing people so well adapted for the purposes of poetry, or so capable of furnishing the occasions of new and striking inventions.

"We are persuaded, that if Mr Scott's powerful and creative genius were to be turned in good earnest to such a subject, something might be produced still more impressive and original than even this age has yet witnessed." *

The second of these paragraphs is a strikingly prophetic one; and if the details already given negative the prediction of the first, — namely, that the immediate popularity of the Lady of the Lake would be less remarkable than that of the Lay or Marmion had been — its other prediction, that the new poem would be "oftener read hereafter than either of the former," has, I believe, proved just.

* It may interest the reader to compare with this passage a brief extract from Sir James Mackintosh's Indian Diary of 1811: —

"The subject of The Lady," says he, "is a common Highland irruption, but at a point where the neighbourhood of the Lowlands affords the best contrast of manners — where the scenery affords the noblest subject of description — and where the wild clan is so near to the Court, that their robberies can be connected with the romantic adventures of a disguised king, an exiled lord, and a high-born beauty. The whole narrative is very fine. There are not so many splendid passages for quotation as in the two former poems. This may indeed silence the objections of the critics, but I doubt whether it will promote the popularity of the poem. It has nothing so good as the Address to Scotland, or the Death of Marmion."— *Life of Mackintosh*, vol. ii. p. 82.

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The Lay, if I may venture to state the creed now established, is, I should say, generally considered as the most natural and original, Marmion as the most powerful and splendid, the Lady of the Lake as the most interesting, romantic, picturesque, and graceful of his great poems.

Of the private opinions expressed at the time of its first publication by his distinguished literary friends, and expressed with an ease and candour equally honourable to them and to him, that of Mr Southey was, as far as I know, the only one which called forth anything like a critical reply; and even here, *more suo*, he seems glad to turn from his own productions to those of his correspondent. It will be seen that Mr Southey had recently put forth the first volume of his history of Brazil; that his Kehama was then in the Ballantyne press; and that he had mentioned to Scott his purpose of writing another poem under the title of "Don Pelayo"—which in the issue was exchanged for that of "Roderick the Last of the Goths."

"*To Robert Southey, Esq., Durham.*

"Edinburgh, May 20, 1810.

'My Dear Southey,

"I am very sensible of the value of your kind approbation of my efforts and trust I shall, under

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such good auspices, keep my ground with the public. I have studied their taste as much as a thing so variable can be calculated upon, and I hope I have again given them an acceptable subject of entertainment. What you say of the songs is very just, and also of the measure. But, on the one hand, I wish to make a difference between my former poems and this new attempt, in the general tenor of versification, and on the other, having an eye to the benefits derivable from the change of stanza, I omitted no opportunity which could be given or taken, of converting my dog-trot into a hop-step-and-jump. I am impatient to see Kehama; James Ballantyne, who has a good deal of tact, speaks very highly of the poetical fire and beauty which pervades it; and, considering the success of Sir William Jones, I should think the Hindhu mythology would not revolt the common readers, for in that lies your only danger. As for Don Pelayo, it should be exquisite under your management: the subject is noble, the parties finely contrasted in manners, dress, religion, and all that the poet desires to bring into action; and your complete knowledge of every historian who has touched upon the period, promises the reader at once delight and instruction.

" Twenty times twenty thanks for the History of Brazil, which has been my amusement, and solace, and spring of instruction for this month past. I

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have always made it my reading-book after dinner, between the removal of the cloth and our early tea-time. There is only one defect I can point out, and that applies to the publishers — I mean the want of a good map. For, to tell you the truth, with my imperfect atlas of South America, I can hardly trace these same *Tups* of yours (which in our Border dialect signifies *rams)*, with all their divisions and subdivisions, through so many ramifications, without a *carte de pays.* The history itself is most singularly entertaining, and throws new light upon a subject which we have hitherto understood very imperfectly. Your labour must have been immense, to judge from the number of curious facts quoted, and unheard-of authorities which you have collected. I have traced the achievements of the Portuguese adventurers with greater interest than I remember to have felt since, when a schoolboy, I first perused the duodecimo collection of Voyages and Discoveries called the World Displayed — a sensation which I thought had been long dead within me; for, to say the truth, the philanthropic and cautious conduct of modern discoverers, though far more amiable, is less entertaining than that of the old Buccaneers, and Spaniards, and Portuguese, who went to conquer and achieve adventures, and met with strange chances of fate in consequence, which could never have befallen a well-armed boat's crew, not trusting themselves

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beyond their watering-place, or trading with the natives on the principles of mercantile good faith.

"I have some thoughts of a journey and voyage to the Hebrides this year, but if I don't make that out, I think I shall make a foray into your northern counties, go to see my friend Morritt at Greta Bridge, and certainly cast myself Keswick-ways either going or coming. I have some literary projects to talk over with you, for the re-editing some of our ancient classical romances and poetry, and so forth. I have great command of our friends the Ballantynes, and I think, so far as the filthy lucre of gain is concerned, I could make a very advantageous bargain for the time which must necessarily be bestowed in such a labour, besides doing an agreeable thing for ourselves, and a useful service to literature. What is become of Coleridge's *Friend?* I hope he had a letter from me, enclosing my trifling subscription. How does *our* friend, Wordsworth? I won't write to him, because he hates letter-writing as much as I do; but I often think on him, and always with affection. If you make any stay at Durham let me know, as I wish you to know my friend Surtees of Mainsforth.*

* This amiable gentleman, author of the History of Durham, in three volumes folio, — one of the most learned as well as interesting works of its class, — was an early and dear friend of Scott's. He died at the family seat of Mainsforth, near Durham, 11th February 1834, in his 55th year. A club has since been

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He is an excellent antiquary, some of the rust of which study has clung to his manners; but he is good-hearted, and you would make the *summer eve* (for so by the courtesy of the kalendar we must call these abominable easterly blighting afternoons) short between you. I presume you are with my friend Dr Southey, who, I hope, has not quite forgotten me, in which faith I beg kind compliments to him, and am ever yours most truly, WALTER SCOTT."

George Ellis having undertaken, at Gifford's request, to review the Lady of the Lake, does not appear to have addressed any letter to the poet upon the subject, until after his article had appeared. He then says simply, that he had therein expressed his candid sentiments, and hoped his friend, as great a worshipper as himself of Dryden's tales, would take in good part his remarks on the octosyllabic metre as applied to serious continued narrative. The following was Scott's reply:—

"*To G. Ellis, Esq.*

"My Dear Ellis,

"I have been scandalously lazy in answering your

instituted for the publication of ancient documents, &c., connected with the History of the English Border, and called, in honour of his memory, *The Surtees Club.*

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kind epistle, received I don't know how long since; but then I had been long your creditor, and I fancy correspondents, like merchants, are often glad to plead their friends' neglect of their accompt-current as an apology for their own, especially when they know that the value of the payments being adjusted, must leave a sad balance against them. I have run up an attempt on the Curse of Kehama for the Quarterly; a strange thing it is—the Curse, I mean —and the critique is not, as the blackguards say worth a damn; but what I could I did, which was to throw as much weight as possible upon the beautiful passages, of which there are many, and to slur over the absurdities, of which there are not a few. It is infinite pity of Southey, with genius almost to exuberance, so much learning and real good feeling of poetry, that, with the true obstinacy of a foolish papa, he *will* be most attached to the defects of his poetical offspring. This said Kehama affords cruel openings for the quizzers, and I suppose will get it roundly in the Edinburgh Review. I could have made a very different hand of it indeed, had the order of the day been *pour déchirer*.*

" I told you how much I was delighted with your critique on the Lady; but, very likely moved by the same feeling for which I have just censured Southey,

* See this article in his *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xvii. pp. 301–337.

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I am still inclined to defend the eight-syllable stanza, which I have somehow persuaded myself is more congenial to the English language — more favourable to narrative poetry at least — than that which has been commonly termed heroic verse. If you will take the trouble to read a page of Pope's Iliad, you will probably find a good many lines out of which two syllables may be struck without injury to the sense. The first lines of this translation have been repeatedly noticed as capable of being cut down from ships of the line into frigates, by striking out the said two-syllabled words, as —

> 'Achilles' wrath to Greece, the *direful* spring
> Of woes unnumbered, *heavenly* goddess sing,
> That wrath which sent to Pluto's *gloomy* reign
> The souls of *mighty* chiefs in battle slain,
> Whose bones unburied on the *desert* shore,
> Devouring dogs and *hungry* vultures tore.'

"Now, since it is true that by throwing out the epithets underscored, we preserve the sense without diminishing the force of the verses — and since it is also true that scarcely one of the epithets are more than merely expletive — I do really think that the structure of verse which requires least of this sort of bolstering, is most likely to be forcible and animated. The case is different in descriptive poetry, because there epithets, if they are happily selected, are rather to be sought after than avoided, and admit of being

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varied *ad infinitum*. But if in narrative you are frequently compelled to tag your substantives with adjectives, it must frequently happen that you are forced upon those that are merely commonplaces, such as '*heavenly* goddess,' '*desert* shore,' and so forth; and I need not tell you, that whenever any syllable is obviously inserted for the completion of a couplet, the reader is disposed to quarrel with it. Besides, the eight-syllable stanza is capable of certain varieties denied to the heroic. Double rhymes, for instance, are congenial to it, which often give a sort of Gothic richness to its cadences; you may also render it more or less rapid by retaining or dropping an occasional syllable. Lastly, and which I think its principal merit, it runs better into sentences than any length of line I know, as it corresponds, upon an average view of our punctuation, very commonly with the proper and usual space between comma and comma. Lastly the Second—and which ought perhaps to have been said first,—I think I have somehow a better knack at this 'false gallop' of verse, as Touchstone calls it, than at your more legitimate hexameters; and so there is the short and long of my longs and shorts. Ever yours,

WALTER SCOTT."

Mr Ellis recurs to the octosyllabic measure of the Lady of the Lake in his next letter. "I don't

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think," says he, "after all the eloquence with which you plead for your favourite metre, that you really like it from any other motive than that *sainte paresse* — that delightful indolence — which induces one to delight in doing those things which we can do with the least fatigue. If you will take the trouble of converting Dryden's Theodore and Honoria (a narrative, is it not?) into Hudibrastic measure, and after trying this on the first twenty lines you feel pleased with the transformation, I will give up the argument; — although, in point of fact, I believe that I regret the *variety* of your own old stanza, much more than the absence of that heroic measure, which you justly remark is not, without great difficulty, capable of being moulded into sentences of various lengths. When, therefore, you give us another poem, pray indulge me with rather a larger share of your ancient dithyrambics."

Canning, too, came to the side of Ellis in this debate. After telling Scott, that "on a repeated perusal" he had been "more and more delighted" with the Lady of the Lake, he says — "But I *should* like to see something a little different when you write next. In short, I have sometimes thought (very presumptuously) that partly by persuasion, and partly by showing the effect of a change of dress — of a fuller and more sweeping style — upon some of your favourite passages, I could induce you to present

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yourself next time in a Drydenic habit. Has this ever occurred to you, and have you tried it, and not liked yourself so well?" We shall see by and by what attention Scott gave to these friendly suggestions.

Of the success of the new poem he speaks as follows in his Introduction of 1830:—"It was certainly so extraordinary as to induce me for the moment to conclude that I had at last fixed a nail in the proverbially inconstant wheel of Fortune. I had attained, perhaps, that degree of public reputation at which prudence, or certainly timidity, would have made a halt, and discontinued efforts by which I was far more likely to diminish my fame than to increase it. But—as the celebrated John Wilkes is said to have explained to King George the Third, that he himself, amid his full tide of popularity, was never a Wilkite—so I can with honest truth exculpate myself from having been at any time a partisan of my own poetry, even when it was in the highest fashion with the million. It must not be supposed that I was either so ungrateful, or so superabundantly candid, as to despise or scorn the value of those whose voice had elevated me so much higher than my own opinion told me I deserved. I felt, on the contrary, the more grateful to the public, as receiving that from partiality which I could not have claimed from merit: and I endeavoured to deserve

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the partiality by continuing such exertions as I was capable of for their amusement."

James Ballantyne has preserved in his *Memorandum* an anecdote strikingly confirmative of the most remarkable statement in this page of Scott's confessions. "I remember," he says, "going into his library shortly after the publication of the Lady of the Lake, and finding Miss Scott (who was then a very young girl) there by herself. I asked her—'Well, Miss Sophia, how do you like the Lady of the Lake?' Her answer was given with perfect simplicity—'Oh, I have not read it; papa says there's nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry.'"

In fact, his children in those days had no idea of the source of his distinction—or rather, indeed, that his position was in any respect different from that of other Advocates, Sheriffs, and Clerks of Session. The eldest boy came home one afternoon about this time from the High School, with tears and blood hardened together upon his cheeks. "Well, Wat," said his father, "what have you been fighting about to-day?" With that the boy blushed and hung his head, and at last stammered out—that "he had been called *a lassie*." "Indeed!" said Mrs Scott, "this was a terrible mischief to be sure." "You may say what you please, mamma," Wat answered roughly, "but I dinna think there's a *waufer* (shab-

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bier) thing in the world than to be a lassie, to sit boring at a clout." Upon further enquiry it turned out that one or two of his companions had dubbed him *The Lady of the Lake*, and the phrase was to him incomprehensible, save as conveying some imputation on his prowess, which he accordingly vindicated in the usual style of the Yards. Of the poem he had never before heard. Shortly after, this story having got wind, one of Scott's colleagues of the Clerks' Table said to the boy—"Gilnockie, my man, you cannot surely help seeing that great people make more work about your papa than they do about me or any other of your *uncles*—what is it, do you suppose, that occasions this?" The little fellow pondered for a minute or two, and then answered very gravely—"It's commonly *him* that sees the hare sitting." And yet this was the man that had his children all along so very much with him. In truth, however, young Walter had guessed pretty shrewdly in the matter, for his father had all the tact of the Sutherland Highlander, whose detection of an Irish rebel up to the neck in a bog, he has commemorated in a note upon Rokeby. Like him, he was quick to catch the *sparkle* of the future victim's eye; and often said jestingly of himself, that whatever might be thought of him as a *maker* (poet), he was an excellent *trouveur*.

Ballantyne adds:—"One day, about this same

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time, when his fame was supposed to have reached its acmé, I said to him—'Will you excuse me, Mr Scott, but I should like to ask you what you think of your own genius as a poet, in comparison with that of Burns?' He replied—'There is no comparison whatever—we ought not to be named in the same day.' 'Indeed!' I answered, 'would you compare Campbell to Burns?' 'No, James, not at all—If you wish to speak of a real poet, Joanna Baillie is now the highest genius of our country.'—But, in fact," (continues Ballantyne)—"he had often said to me that neither his own nor any modern popular style of composition was that from which he derived most pleasure. I asked him what it was. He answered—Johnson's; and that he had more pleasure in reading *London*, and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, than any other poetical composition he could mention; and I think I never saw his countenance more indicative of high admiration than while reciting aloud from those productions."

In his Sketch of Johnson's Life, Scott says—"The deep and pathetic morality of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, has often extracted tears from those whose eyes wander dry over pages professedly sentimental."* And Lord Byron, in his Ravenna Diary,† has the following entry on the same subject:

* *Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. iii. p. 264.

† *Life and Works*, vol. v. p. 66.

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—"Read Johnson's Vanity of Human Wishes,—all the examples and mode of giving them sublime, as well as the latter part, with the exception of an occasional couplet. 'Tis a grand poem—and so *true!*—true as the 10th of Juvenal himself. The lapse of ages changes all things—time—language—the earth—the bounds of the sea—the stars of the sky, and every thing about, around, and underneath man, except man himself, who has always been, and always will be, an unlucky rascal. The infinite variety of lives conduct but to death, and the infinity of wishes lead but to disappointment."—

The last line of MS. that Scott sent to the press was a quotation from the "Vanity of Human Wishes." Yet it is the cant of our day—above all, of its poetasters, that Johnson was no poet. To be sure, they say the same of Pope—and hint it occasionally even of Dryden.

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CHAPTER XXI.

First Visit to the Hebrides — Staffa — Skye — Mull — Iona, &c. — The Lord of the Isles projected — Letters to Joanna Baillie — Southey — and Morritt.

1810.

WALTER SCOTT was at this epoch in the highest spirits, and having strong reasons of various kinds for his resolution to avail himself of the gale of favour, only hesitated in which quarter to explore the materials of some new romance. His first and most earnest desire was to spend a few months with the British army in the Peninsula, but this he soon resigned, from an amiable motive, which a letter presently to be quoted will explain. He then thought of revisiting Rokeby — for he had from the first day that he spent on that magnificent domain, contem-

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plated it as the scenery of a future poem. But the burst of enthusiasm which followed the appearance of the Lady of the Lake finally swayed him to undertake a journey, deeper than he had as yet gone, into the *Highlands*, and a warm invitation from the Laird of Staffa,* a brother of his friend and colleague Mr Macdonald Buchanan, easily induced him to add a voyage to the *Hebrides*. He was accompanied by part of his family (not forgetting his dog Wallace), and by several friends besides; among others his relation Mrs Apreece (now Lady Davy), who had been, as he says in one of his letters, "a lioness of the first magnitude in Edinburgh," during the preceding winter. He travelled slowly with his own horses, through Argyleshire, as far as Oban; but indeed, even where post-horses might have been had, this was the mode he always preferred in these family excursions, for he delighted in the liberty it afforded him of alighting and lingering as often and as long as he chose: and, in truth, he often performed the far greater part of the day's journey on foot—examining the map in the morning so as to make himself master of the bearings—and following

* The reader will find a warm tribute to Staffa's character as a Highland landlord, in Scott's article on Sir John Carr's Caledonian Sketches,—(*Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xix.); and some spirited verses, written at his mansion of Ulva, in Scott's *Poetical Works*, edition 1834, vol. x. p. 356.

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his own fancy over some old disused riding track, or along the margin of a stream, while the carriage, with its female occupants, adhered to the proper road. At Oban, where they took to the sea, Mrs Apreece met him by appointment.

He seems to have kept no journal during this expedition; but I shall string together some letters which, with the notes that he contributed many years afterwards to Mr Croker's Edition of Boswell, may furnish a tolerable sketch of the insular part of his progress, and of the feelings with which he first inspected the localities of his last great poem—The Lord of the Isles. The first of these letters is dated from the Hebridean residence of the young Laird of Staffa.*

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"Ulva House, July 19, 1810.

"I cannot, my dear Miss Baillie, resist the temptation of writing to you from scenes which you have rendered classical as well as immortal. We—which in the present case means my wife, my eldest girl, and myself—are thus far in fortunate accomplishment of a pilgrimage to the Hebrides. The day before

* Sir Reginald Macdonald Steuart Seton, of Staffa, Allanton, and Touch, Baronet, died 15th April 1838, in his 61st year.

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yesterday we passed the Lady's Rock, in the Sound of Mull, so near that I could almost have touched it. This is, you know, the Rock of your *Family Legend*. The boat, by my desire, went as near as prudence permitted; and I wished to have picked a relic from it, were it but a cockle-shell or a mussel, to have sent to you; but a spring-tide was running with such force and velocity as to make the thing impossible. About two miles farther, we passed under the Castle of Duart, the seat of Maclean, consisting of one huge (indeed immense) square tower, in ruins, and additional turrets and castellated buildings (the work, doubtless, of Benlora's guardianship), on which the roof still moulders. It overhangs the strait channel from a lofty rock, without a single tree in the vicinity, and is surrounded by high and barren mountains, forming altogether as wild and dreary a scene as I ever beheld. Duart is confronted by the opposite castles of Dunstaffnage, Dunolly, Ardtornish, and others, all once the abodes of grim feudal chiefs, who warred incessantly with each other. I think I counted seven of these fortresses in sight at once, and heard seven times seven legends of war and wonder connected with them. We landed late, wet and cold, on the Island of Mull, near another old castle called Aros, separated, too, from our clothes, which were in a large wherry, which could not keep pace with our row-boat. Mr Macdonald of Staffa,

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my kind friend and guide, had sent his piper (a constant attendant, mark that!) to rouse a Highland gentleman's family in the neighbourhood, where we were received with a profusion of kindness and hospitality. Why should I appal you with a description of our difficulties and distresses — how Charlotte lost her shoes, and little Sophia her whole collection of pebbles — how I was divorced from my razors, and the whole party looked like a Jewish sanhedrim! By this time we were accumulated as follows: — Sir George Paul, the great philanthropist, Mrs Apreece, a distant relation of mine, Hannah Mackenzie, a daughter of our friend Henry, and Mackinnon of Mackinnon, a young gentleman born and bred in England, but nevertheless a Highland chief.* It seems his father had acquired wealth, and this young man, who now visits the Highlands for the first time, is anxious to buy back some of the family property which was sold long since. Some twenty Mackinnons, who happened to live within hearing of our arrival (that is, I suppose, within ten miles of Aros), came posting to see their young chief, who behaved with great kindness, and propriety, and liberality. Next day we rode across the isle on Highland ponies, attended by a numerous retinue of

* William Alexander Mackinnon, Esq., now member of Parliament for Lymington, Hants.

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gillies, and arrived at the head of the salt-water loch called Loch-an-Gaoil, where Staffa's boats awaited us with colours flying and pipes playing. We proceeded in state to this lonely isle, where our honoured lord has a very comfortable residence, and were received by a discharge of swivels and musketry from his people.

"Yesterday we visited Staffa and Iona: The former is one of the most extraordinary places I ever beheld. It exceeded, in my mind, every description I had heard of it; or rather, the appearance of the cavern, composed entirely of basaltic pillars as high as the roof of a cathedral,* and running deep into

* "——— that wondrous dome,
Where, as to shame the temples deck'd
By skill of earthly architect,
Nature herself, it seem'd, would raise
A minster to her Maker's praise!
Not for a meaner use ascend
Her columns, or her arches bend;
Nor of a theme less solemn tells
That mighty surge that ebbs and swells,
And still, between each awful pause
From the high vault an answer draws,
In varied tone prolonged and high,
That mocks the organ's melody.
Nor doth its entrance front in vain
To old Iona's holy fane,
That Nature's voice might seem to say,
'Well hast thou done, frail Child of clay!

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the rock, eternally swept by a deep and swelling sea, and paved as it were with ruddy marble, baffles all description. You can walk along the broken pillars, with some difficulty, and in some places with a little danger, as far as the farthest extremity. Boats also can come in below when the sea is placid, — which is seldom the case. I had become a sort of favourite with the Hebridean boatmen, I suppose from my anxiety about their old customs, and they were much pleased to see me get over the obstacles which stopped some of the party. So they took the whim of solemnly christening a great stone seat at the mouth of the cavern, Clachan-an-Bairdh, or the Poet's Stone. It was consecrated with a pibroch, which the echoes rendered tremendous, and a glass of whisky, not poured forth in the ancient mode of libation, but turned over the throats of the assistants. The head boatman, whose father had been himself a bard, made me a speech on the occasion; but as it was in Gaelic, I could only receive it as a silly beauty does a fine-spun compliment — bow, and say nothing.

" When this fun was over (in which, strange as it may seem, the men were quite serious), we went

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Thy humble powers that stately shrine
Task'd high and hard — but witness mine!' "
Lord of the Isles, Canto iv. St. 10.

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to Iona, where there are some ancient and curious monuments. From this remote island the light of Christianity shone forth on Scotland and Ireland. The ruins are of a rude architecture, but curious to the antiquary. Our return was less comfortable; we had to row twenty miles against an Atlantic tide and some wind, besides the pleasure of seeing occasional squalls gathering to windward. The ladies were sick, especially poor Hannah Mackenzie, and none of the gentlemen escaped except Staffa and myself. The men, however, cheered by the pipes, and by their own interesting boat-songs, which were uncommonly wild and beautiful, one man leading and the others answering in chorus, kept pulling away without apparently the least sense of fatigue, and we reached Ulva at ten at night, tolerably wet, and well disposed for bed.

"Our friend Staffa is himself an excellent specimen of Highland chieftainship; he is a cadet of Clanronald, and lord of a cluster of isles on the western side of Mull, and a large estate (in extent at least) on that island. By dint of minute attention to this property, and particularly to the management of his kelp, he has at once trebled his income and doubled his population, while emigration is going on all around him. But he is very attentive to his people, who are distractedly fond of him, and has them under such regulations as conduce both to his

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own benefit and their profit; and keeps a certain sort of rude state and hospitality, in which they can take much pride. I am quite satisfied that nothing under the personal attention of the landlord himself will satisfy a Highland tenantry, and that the substitution of factors, which is now becoming general, is one great cause of emigration. This mode of life has, however, its evils; and I can see them in this excellent man. The habit of solitary power is dangerous even to the best regulated minds, and this ardent and enthusiastic young man has not escaped the prejudices incident to his situation. But I think I have bestowed enough of my tediousness upon you. To ballast my letter, I put in one of the hallowed green pebbles from the shore of St Columba — put it into your work-basket until we meet, when you will give me some account of its virtues. Don't suppose the lapidaries can give you any information about it, for in their profane eyes it is good for nothing. But the piper is sounding to breakfast, so no more (excepting love to Miss Agnes, Dr and Mrs Baillie), from your truly affectionate

WALTER SCOTT.

"P. S. — I am told by the learned, the pebble will wear its way out of the letter, so I will keep it till I get to Edinburgh. I must not omit to mention, that all through these islands I have found every person

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familiarly acquainted with the Family Legend, and great admirers."

It would be idle to extract many of Scott's notes on Boswell's Hebridean Journal; but the following specimens appear too characteristic to be omitted. Of the island Inchkenneth, where Johnson was received by the head of the clan Maclean, he says—

"Inchkenneth is a most beautiful little islet of the most verdant green, while all the neighbouring shore of Greban, as well as the large islands of Colonsay and Ulva, are as black as heath and moss can make them. But Ulva has a good anchorage, and Inchkenneth is surrounded by shoals. It is now uninhabited. The ruins of the huts, in which Dr Johnson was received by Sir Allan M'Lean, were still to be seen, and some tatters of the paper hangings were to be seen on the walls. Sir George Onesiphorus Paul was at Inchkenneth with the same party of which I was a member. He seemed to me to suspect many of the Highland tales which he heard, but he showed most incredulity on the subject of Johnson's having been entertained in the wretched huts of which we saw the ruins. He took me aside, and conjured me to tell him the truth of the matter. 'This Sir Allan,' said he, 'was he a *regular baronet*, or was his title such a traditional one as you find in Ireland?' I assured my excellent acquaintance, that, 'for my own part, I would have paid more respect to a Knight of Kerry, or Knight of Glynn—yet Sir Allan M'Lean was a *regular baronet* by patent;' and, having given him this information, I took the liberty of asking him, in return, whether he would not in conscience prefer the worst cell in the jail at Gloucester (which he had been very active in overlooking while the building was going on) to those exposed hovels where Johnson had been en-

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tertained by rank and beauty. He looked round the little islet, and allowed Sir Allan had some advantage in exercising ground; but in other respects he thought the compulsory tenants of Gloucester had greatly the advantage. Such was his opinion of a place, concerning which Johnson has recorded that 'it wanted little which palaces could afford.'

"Sir Allan M'Lean, like many Highland chiefs, was embarrassed in his private affairs, and exposed to unpleasant solicitations from attorneys, called, in Scotland, *Writers* (which, indeed, was the chief motive of his retiring to Inchkenneth.) Upon one occasion he made a visit to a friend, then residing at Carron Lodge, on the banks of the Carron, where the banks of that river are studded with pretty villas. Sir Allan, admiring the landscape, asked his friend whom that handsome seat belonged to. 'M——, the Writer to the Signet,' was the reply. 'Umph!' said Sir Allan, but not with an accent of assent, 'I mean that other house.' 'Oh! that belongs to a very honest fellow, Jamie ——, also a Writer to the Signet.' — 'Umph!' said the Highland chief of M'Lean, with more emphasis than before. — 'And yon smaller house?' — 'That belongs to a Stirling man; I forget his name, but I am sure he is a writer too; for'—— Sir Allan, who had recoiled a quarter of a circle backward at every response, now wheeled the circle entire, and turned his back on the landscape, saying, 'My good friend, I must own you have a pretty situation here, but d—n your neighbourhood.'"

The following notices of Boswell himself, and his father, Lord Auchinleck, may be taken as literal transcripts from Scott's Table-Talk:—

"Boswell himself was callous to the *contacts* of Dr Johnson, and when telling them, always reminds one of a jockey receiving a kick from the horse which he is showing off to a customer and

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is grinning with pain while he is trying to cry out, 'Pretty rogue — no vice — all fun.' To him Johnson's rudeness was only '*pretty Fanny's way.*' Dr Robertson had a sense of good breeding, which inclined him rather to forego the benefit of Johnson's conversation than awaken his rudeness. . . . . .

"Old Lord Auchinleck was an able lawyer, a good scholar, after the manner of Scotland, and highly valued his own advantages as a man of good estate and ancient family; and, moreover, he was a strict Presbyterian and Whig of the old Scottish cast. This did not prevent his being a terribly proud aristocrat; and great was the contempt he entertained and expressed for his son James, for the nature of his friendship, and the character of the personages of whom he was *engoué* one after another. 'There 's nae hope for Jamie, mon,' he said to a friend. 'Jamie is gane clean gyte. What do you think, mon? He 's done wi' Paoli — he's off wi' the land-louping scoundrel of a Corsican; and whose tail do you think he has pinned himself to now, mon?' Here the old Judge summoned up a sneer of most sovereign contempt. 'A *dominie*, mon — an auld dominie! he keeped a schule, and caud it an *acaadamy*.' Probably if this had been reported to Johnson, he would have felt it most galling, for he never much liked to think of that period of his life; it would have aggravated his dislike of Lord Auchinleck's Whiggery and Presbyterianism. These the old Lord carried to such an unusual height, that once, when a country man came in to state some justice business, and being required to make his oath, declined to do so before his Lordship, because he was not a *covenanted* magistrate — 'Is that a' your objection, mon?' said the Judge; 'come your ways in here, and we'll baith of us tak the solemn league and covenant together.' The oath was accordingly agreed and sworn to by both, and I dare say it was the last time it ever received such homage. It may be surmised how far Lord Auchinleck, such as he is here described, was likely to suit a high Tory and Episcopalian like Johnson. As they approached Auchinleck, Boswell conjured

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Johnson by all the ties of regard, and in requital of the services he had rendered him upon his tour, that he would spare two subjects in tenderness to his father's prejudices; the first related to Sir John Pringle, President of the Royal Society, about whom there was then some dispute current; the second concerned the general question of Whig and Tory. Sir John Pringle, as Boswell says, escaped, but the controversy between Tory and Covenanter raged with great fury, and ended in Johnson's pressing upon the old Judge the question, what good Cromwell, of whom he had said something derogatory, had ever done to his country? — when, after being much tortured, Lord Auchinleck at last spoke out, 'God! doctor, he gart kings ken that they had a *lith* in their neck' — he taught kings they had a *joint* in their necks. Jamie then set to mediating between his father and the philosopher, and availing himself of the Judge's sense of hospitality, which was punctilious, reduced the debate to more order."

The following letter, dated Ashestiel, August 9, appears to have been written immediately on Scott's return from this expedition :—

"*To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq., Rokeby Park.*

"My Dear Morritt,

"Your letter reached me in the very centre of the Isle of Mull, from which circumstance you will perceive how vain it was for me even to attempt availing myself of your kind invitation to Rokeby, which would otherwise have given us so much pleasure. We deeply regretted the absence of our kind

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and accomplished friends, the Clephanes, yet, *entre nous*, as we were upon a visit to a family of the Capulets, I do not know but we may pay our respects to them more pleasantly at another time. There subsist some aching scars of the old wounds which were in former times inflicted upon each other by the rival tribes of M'Lean and Macdonald, and my very good friends the Laird of Staffa and Mrs M'Lean Clephane are both too true Highlanders to be without the characteristic prejudices of their clans, which, in their case, divide two highly-accomplished and most estimable families, living almost within sight of each other, and on an island where polished conversation cannot be supposed to abound.

"I was delighted, on the whole, with my excursion. The weather was most excellent during the whole time of our wanderings; and I need not tell you of Highland hospitality. The cavern at Staffa, and indeed the island itself, *dont on parle en histoire*, is one of the few *lions* which completely maintain an extended reputation. I do not know whether its extreme resemblance to a work of art, from the perfect regularity of the columns, or the grandeur of its dimensions, far exceeding the works of human industry, joined to a certain ruggedness and magnificent irregularity, by which nature vindicates her handiwork, are most forcibly impressed upon my memory. We also saw the far-famed Island of Columba, where

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there are many monuments of singular curiosity, forming a strange contrast to the squalid and dejected poverty of the present inhabitants of the isle. We accomplished both these objects in one day, but our return, though we had no alarms to boast of, was fatiguing to the ladies, and the sea not affording us quite such a smooth passage as we had upon the Thames (that morning we heard the voice of Lysons setting forth the contents of the records in the White Tower), did, as one may say, excite a combustion in the stomachs of some of our party. Mine being a staunch anti-revolutionist, was no otherwise troublesome than by demanding frequent supplies of cold beef and biscuit. Mrs Apreece was of our party. Also

> — Sir George Paul, for prison-house renowned,
> A wandering knight, on high adventures bound.

— We left this celebrated philanthropist in a plight not unlike some of the misadventures of 'Him of the sorrowful figure.' The worthy baronet was mounted on a quadruped, which the owners called a pony, with his woful valet on another, and travelling slowly along the coast of Mull, in order to detect the point which approached nearest to the continent, protesting he would not again put foot in a boat till he had discovered the shortest possible traject. Our separation reminded me of the disastrous incident

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in Byron's Shipwreck, when they were forced to abandon two of their crew on an unknown coast, and beheld them at a distance commencing their solitary peregrination along the cliffs.

WALTER SCOTT."

The Iona pebble, mentioned in Scott's letter from Ulva, being set in a brooch of the form of a harp, was sent to Joanna Baillie some months later; but it may be as well to insert here the letter which accompanied it. The young friend, to whose return from a trip to the seat of war in the Peninsula it alludes, was John Miller, Esq., then practising at the Scotch bar, but now an eminent King's counsel of Lincoln's Inn.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.*

"Edinburgh, Nov. 23, 1810.

"I should not have been so long your debtor, my dear Miss Baillie, for your kind and valued letter, had not the false knave, at whose magic touch the Iona pebbles were to assume a shape in some degree appropriate to the person to whom they are destined, delayed finishing his task. I hope you will set some value upon this little trumpery brooch, because it is a harp, and a Scotch harp, and set with Iona stones

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This last circumstance is more valuable, if ancient tales be true, than can be ascertained from the reports of dull modern lapidaries. These green stones, blessed of St Columba, have a virtue, saith old Martin, to gratify each of them a single wish of the wearer. I believe, that which is most frequently formed by those who gather them upon the shores of the Saint, is for a fair wind to transport them from his domains. Now, after this, you must suppose everything respecting this said harp sacred and hallowed. The very inscription is, you will please tc observe, in the ancient Celtic language and character, and has a very talismanic look. I hope that upon you it will have the effect of a conjuration, for the words *Buail a'n Teud* signify *Strike the String;* and thus having, like the pedlars who deal in like matters of value, exhausted all my eloquence in setting forth the excellent outward qualities and mysterious virtues of my little keepsake, I have only to add, in homely phrase, God give you joy to wear it. I am delighted with the account of your brother's silvan empire in Glo'stershire. The planting and cultivation of trees always seemed to me the most interesting occupation of the country. I cannot enter into the spirit of common vulgar farming, though I am doomed to carry on, in a small extent, that losing trade. It never occurred to me to be a bit more happy because my turnips were better than my

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neighbours; and as for *grieving* my shearers, as we very emphatically term it in Scotland, I am always too happy to get out of the way, that I may hear them laughing at a distance when on the harvest rigg.

> 'So every servant takes his course,
> And bad at first, they all grow worse'—

I mean for the purposes of agriculture, — for my hind shall kill a salmon, and my plough-boy find a hare sitting, with any man in the forest. But planting and pruning trees I could work at from morning till night; and if ever my poetical revenues enable me to have a few acres of my own, that is one of the principal pleasures I look forward to. There is, too, a sort of self-congratulation, a little tickling self-flattery in the idea that, while you are pleasing and amusing yourself, you are seriously contributing to the future welfare of the country, and that your very acorn may send its future ribs of oak to future victories like Trafalgar.

"You have now by my calculation abandoned your extensive domains and returned to your Hampstead villa, which, at this season of the year, though the lesser, will prove, from your neighbourhood to good society, the more comfortable habitation of the two. Dr Baillie's cares are transferred (I fear for some time) to a charge still more important than the

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poor Princess.* I trust in God that his skill and that of his brethren may be of advantage to the poor King; for a Regency, from its unsettled and uncertain tenure, must in every country, but especially where parties run so high, be a lamentable business. I wonder that the consequences which have taken place had not occurred sooner, during the long and trying suspense in which his mind must have been held by the protracted lingering state of a beloved child.

"Your country neighbours interest me excessively. I was delighted with the man, who remembered me, though he had forgotten Sancho Panza; but I am afraid my pre-eminence in his memory will not remain much longer than the worthy squire's government at Barataria. Meanwhile, the Lady of the Lake is likely to come to preferment in an unexpected manner, for two persons of no less eminence than Messrs Martin and Reynolds, play carpenters in ordinary to Covent Garden, are employed in scrubbing, careening, and cutting her down into one of those new-fashioned sloops called a melo-drama, to be launched at the theatre; and my friend, Mr H. Siddons, emulous of such a noble design, is at work on the same job here. It puts me in mind of

* The Princess Amelia — whose death was immediately followed by the hopeless malady of King George III.

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the observation with which our parish smith accompanied his answer to an enquiry whom he had heard preach on Sunday — 'Mr such-a-one — O! sir, he made *neat work*,' thinking, doubtless, of turning off a horse-shoe handsomely. I think my worthy artizans will make neat work too before they have done with my unlucky materials — but, as Durandarte says in the cavern of Montesinos — 'Patience, cousin, and shuffle the cards.' Jeffrey *was* the author of the critique in the Edinburgh; he sent it to me in the sheet, with an apology for some things in that of Marmion which he said contained needless asperities; and, indeed, whatever I may think of the justice of some part of his criticism, I think his general tone is much softened in my behalf.

"You say nothing about the drama on Fear, for which you have chosen so admirable a subject, and which, I think, will be in your own most powerful manner. I hope you will have an eye to its being actually represented. Perhaps of all passions it is the most universally interesting; for although most part of an audience may have been in love once in their lives, and many engaged in the pursuits of ambition, and some perhaps have fostered deadly hate; yet there will always be many in each case who cannot judge of the operations of these motives from personal experience: Whereas, I will bet my

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life there is not a soul of them but has felt the impulse of fear, were it but, as the old tale goes, at snuffing a candle with his fingers. I believe I should have been able to communicate some personal anecdotes on the subject, had I been enabled to accomplish a plan I have had much at heart this summer, namely, to take a peep at Lord Wellington and his merry men in Portugal; but I found the idea gave Mrs Scott more distress than I am entitled to do for the mere gratification of my own curiosity. Not that there would have been any great danger,—for I could easily, as a non-combatant, have kept out of the way of the 'grinning honour' of my namesake, Sir Walter Blount,* and I think I should have been overpaid for a little hardship and risk by the novelty of the scene. I could have got very good recommendations to Lord Wellington; and, I dare say, I should have picked up some curious materials for battle scenery. A friend of mine made the very expedition, and arriving at Oporto when our army was in retreat from the frontier, he was told of the difficulty and danger he might encounter in crossing the country to the southward, so as to join them on the march; nevertheless, he travelled on through a country totally deserted, unless when he met bands of fugitive peasantry flying they scarce knew whither, or the yet wilder groups of the Ordi-

* See 1*st K. Henry IV. Act V. Scene* 3.

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nanza, or *levy en masse*, who, fired with revenge or desire of plunder, had armed themselves to harass the French detached parties. At length in a low glen he heard, with feelings that may be easily conceived, the distant sound of a Highland bagpipe playing 'The Garb of Old Gaul,' and fell into the quarters of a Scotch regiment, where he was most courteously received by his countrymen, who assured 'his honour he was just come in time to see the pattle.' Accordingly, being a young man of spirit, and a volunteer sharp-shooter, he got a rifle, joined the light corps, and next day witnessed the Battle of Busaco, of which he describes the carnage as being terrible. The narrative was very simply told, and conveyed, better than any I have seen, the impressions which such scenes are likely to make when they have the effect (I had almost said the charm) of novelty. I don't know why it is I never found a soldier could give me an idea of a battle. I believe their mind is too much upon the *tactique* to regard the picturesque, just as the lawyers care very little for an eloquent speech at the bar, if it does not show good doctrine. The technical phrases of the military art, too, are unfavourable to convey a description of the concomitant terror and desolation that attends an engagement; but enough of 'this bald disjointed chat,'* from ever yours, W. S."

* Hotspur — 1st *K. Henry IV. Act I. Scene* 3.

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There appeared in the London Courier of September 15, 1810, an article signed S. T. C., charging Scott with being a plagiarist, more especially from the works of the poet for whose initials this signature had no doubt been meant to pass. On reading this silly libel, Mr Southey felt satisfied that Samuel Taylor Coleridge could have no concern in its manufacture; but as Scott was not so well acquainted with Coleridge as himself, he lost no time in procuring his friend's indignant disavowal, and forwarding it to Ashestiel. Scott acknowledges this delicate attention as follows:—

"*To Robert Southey, Esq.*

"Ashestiel, Thursday.

"My Dear Southey,

"Your letter, this morning received, released me from the very painful feeling, that a man of Mr Coleridge's high talents, which I had always been among the first to appreciate as they deserve, had thought me worthy of the sort of public attack which appeared in the Courier of the 15th. The initials are so remarkable, and the trick so very impudent, that I was likely to be fairly duped by it, for which I have to request Mr Coleridge's forgiveness. I believe attacks of any sort sit as light upon me as they can on any one. If I have had my share of

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them, it is one point, at least, in which I resemble greater poets—but I should not like to have them come from the hand of contemporary genius. A man, though he does not 'wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at,'* would not willingly be stooped upon by a falcon. I am truly obliged to your friendship for so speedily relieving me from so painful a feeling. The hoax was probably designed to set two followers of literature by the ears, and I daresay will be followed up by something equally impudent. As for the imitations, I have not the least hesitation in saying to you, that I was unconscious at the time of appropriating the goods of others, although I have not the least doubt that several of the passages must have been running in my head. Had I meant to steal, I would have been more cautious to disfigure the stolen goods. In one or two instances the resemblance seems general and casual, and in one, I think, it was impossible I could practise plagiarism, as Ethwald, one of the poems quoted, was published *after* the Lay of the Last Minstrel. A witty rogue, the other day, who sent me a letter subscribed Detector, proved me guilty of stealing a passage from one of Vida's Latin poems, which I had never seen or heard of; yet there was so strong a general resemblance, as fairly to authorize Detector's suspicion.

* *Othello, Act I. Scene* 1.

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"I renounced my Greta excursion in consequence of having made instead a tour to the Highlands, particularly to the Isles. I wished for Wordsworth and you a hundred times. The scenery is quite different from that on the mainland — dark, savage, and horrid, but occasionally magnificent in the highest degree. Staffa, in particular, merits well its far-famed reputation: it is a cathedral arch, scooped by the hand of nature, equal in dimensions and in regularity to the most magnificent aisle of a gothic cathedral. The sea rolls up to the extremity in most tremendous majesty, and with a voice like ten thousand giants shouting at once. I visited Icolmkill also, where there are some curious monuments, mouldering among the poorest and most naked wretches that I ever beheld. Affectionately yours,

W. SCOTT."

The "lines of VIDA," which "Detector" had enclosed to Scott as the obvious original of the address to "Woman" in Marmion, closing with

> "When pain and anguish wring the brow,
> A ministering angel thou!"

end as follows;—and it must be owned that, if Vida had really written them, a more extraordinary example of casual coincidence could never have been pointed out—

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" Cum dolor atque supercilio gravis imminet angor,
Fungeris angelico sola ministerio! "

Detector's reference is " VIDA *ad Eranen*, El. II. v. 21 ;"—but it is almost needless to add there are no such lines—and no piece bearing such a title in Vida's works. Detector was no doubt some young college wag, for his letter has a Cambridge post-mark.

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CHAPTER XXII.

Life of Miss Seward — Waverley resumed — Ballantyne's Critique on the First Chapters of the Novel — Waverley again laid aside — Unfortunate Speculations of John Ballantyne and Co.; History of the Culdees — Tixall Poetry; Beaumont and Fletcher — Edinburgh Annual Register, &c. — Scott's Essay on Judicial Reform — His scheme of going to India — Letters on the War in the Peninsula — Death of Lord President Blair — and of Lord Melville — Publication of the Vision of Don Roderick — The Inferno of Altesidora, &c.

1810–1811.

In the course of this autumn appeared the Poetical Works of Miss Seward, in three volumes, with a Prefatory Memoir of her Life by Scott. This edition had, as we have seen, been enjoined by her

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last will—but his part in it was an ungrateful one, and the book was among the most unfortunate that James Ballantyne printed, and his brother published, in deference to the personal feelings of their partner. He had been, as was natural, pleased and flattered by the attentions of the Lichfield poetess in the days of his early aspirations after literary distinction; but her verses, which he had with his usual readiness praised to herself beyond their worth, appeared when collected a formidable monument of mediocrity. Her Correspondence, published at the same time by Constable, was considered by him with still greater aversion. He requested the bookseller to allow him to look over the MS., and draw his pen through passages in which her allusions to letters of his own might compromise him as a critic on his poetical contemporaries. To this request Constable handsomely acceded, although it was evident that he thus deprived the collection of its best chance of popularity. I see, on comparing her letters as they originally reached Scott, with the printed copies, that he had also struck out many of her most extravagant rhapsodies about himself and his works. No collection of this kind, after all, can be wholly without value; I have already drawn from it some sufficiently interesting fragments, as the biographers of other eminent authors of this time will probably do hereafter under the like circumstances:

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and, however affected and absurd, Miss Seward's prose is certainly far better than her verse.

And now I come to a very curious letter of James Ballantyne's, the date of which seems to fix pretty accurately the time when Scott *first* resumed the long-forgotten MS. of his Waverley. As in the Introduction of 1829 he mentions having received discouragement as to the opening part of the novel from two friends, and as Ballantyne on this occasion writes as if he had never before seen any portion of it, I conclude that the fragment of 1805 had in that year been submitted to Erskine alone.

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Ashestiel.*

"Edinburgh, Sept. 15, 1810.

"Dear Sir,

"What you have sent of Waverley has amused me much; and certainly if I had read it as part of a new novel, the remainder of which was open to my perusal, I should have proceeded with avidity. So much for its general effect; but you have sent me too little to enable me to form a decided opinion. Were I to say that I was equally struck with Waverley as I was with the much smaller portion of the Lady, which you first presented to us as a specimen, the truth would not be in me; but the cases

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are different. It is impossible that a small part of a fine novel can equally impress one with the decided conviction of splendour and success as a small part of a fine poem. I will state one or two things that strike me. Considering that 'sixty years since' only leads us back to the year 1750, a period when our fathers were alive and merry, it seems to me that the air of antiquity diffused over the character is rather too great to harmonize with the time. The period is modern; Johnson was writing — and Garrick was acting — and in fact scarcely anything appears to have altered, more important than the cut of a coat.

"The account of the studies of Waverley seems unnecessarily minute. There are few novel readers to whom it would be interesting. I can see at once the connexion between the studies of Don Quixote, or of the Female Quixote, and the events of their lives; but I have not yet been able to trace betwixt Waverley's character and his studies such clear and decided connexion. The account, in short, seemed to me too particular; quite unlike your usual mode in your poetry, and less happy. It may be, however, that the further progress of the character will defeat this criticism. The character itself I think excellent and interesting, and I was equally astonished and delighted to find in the last-written chapter, that you can paint to the eye in prose as well as in verse.

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"Perhaps your own reflections are rather too often mixed with the narrative—but I state this with much diffidence. I do not mean to object to a train of reflections arising from some striking event, but I don't like their so frequent recurrence. The language is spirited, but perhaps rather careless. The humour is admirable. Should you go on? My opinion is, clearly—certainly. I have no doubt of success, though it is impossible to guess how much. . . . . .—Ever respectfully, J. B."

The part of the letter which I have omitted, refers to the state of Ballantyne's business at the time when it was written. He had, that same week, completed the eleventh edition of the Lay; and the fifth of the Lady of the Lake had not passed through his press, before new orders from London called for the beginning of a sixth. I presume the printer's exultation on this triumphant success had a great share in leading him to consider with doubt and suspicion the propriety of his friend's interrupting just then his career as the great caterer for readers of poetry. However this and other matters may have stood, the novel appears to have been forthwith laid aside again.

Some sentences refer to less fortunate circumstances in their joint affairs. The publishing firm was not as yet a twelvemonth old, and already James

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began to apprehend that some of their mightiest undertakings would wholly disappoint Scott's prognostications. He speaks with particular alarm of the edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays, of which Weber had now dismissed several volumes from his incompetent and presumptuous hand. How Scott should ever have countenanced the project of an edition of an English book of this class, by a mere drudging *German*, appears to me quite inexplicable. He placed at Weber's disposal his own annotated copy, which had been offered some years before for the use of Gifford; but Weber's text is thoroughly disgraceful, and so are all the notes, except those which he owed to his patron's own pen. James Ballantyne augurs, and well might he do so, not less darkly, as to "the Aston speculation"—that is, the bulky collection entitled "Tixall poetry." "Over this," he says, "the (Edinburgh) Review of the Sadler has thrown a heavy cloud—the fact is, it seems to me to have ruined it. Here is the same editor and the same printer, and your name withdrawn. I hope you agree with John and me, that this Aston business ought to be got rid of at almost any sacrifice. We could not now even ask a London bookseller to take a share, and a net outlay of near £2500, upon a worse than doubtful speculation, is surely 'most tolerable and not to be endured.'"

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Another unpromising adventure of this season, was the publication of the History of *the Culdees* (that is, of the clergy of the primitive Scoto-Celtic Church), by Scott's worthy old friend, Dr John Jamieson, the author of the celebrated Dictionary. This work, treating of an obscure subject, on which very different opinions were and are entertained by Episcopalians on the one hand, and the adherents of Presbyterianism on the other, was also printed and published by the Ballantynes, in consequence of the interest which Scott felt, not for the writer's hypothesis, but for the writer personally: and the result was another heavy loss to himself and his partners. But a far more serious business was the establishment of the Edinburgh Annual Register, which, as we have seen, was suggested by Scott in the very dawn of his bookselling projects. The two first volumes were issued about this time, and expectation had been highly excited by the announcement that the historical department was in the hands of Southey, while Scott and many other eminent persons were to contribute regularly to its miscellaneous literature and science. Mr Southey was fortunate in beginning his narrative with the great era of the Spanish Revolt against Napoleon, and it exhibited his usual research, reflection, elegance, and spirit. Several of the miscellanies, also, were admirable. Mr Southey inserted in the second volume for 1808,

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published in 1810, some of the most admired of his minor poems;—and Scott did the like. He moreover drew up for that volume an Essay of considerable extent on those changes in the Scottish System of Judicature, which had occupied the attention of the Commission under which he served as secretary; and the sagacity of this piece appears, on the whole, as honourable to him, as the clear felicity of its language. Nevertheless, the public were alarmed by the prospect of two volumes annually: it was, in short, a new periodical publication on a large scale; all such adventures are hazardous in the extreme; and none of them ever can succeed, unless there be a skilful bookseller, and a zealous editor, who give a very large share of their industry and intelligence, day after day, to the conduct of all its arrangements. Such a bookseller John Ballantyne was not; such an editor, with Scott's multifarious engagements, he could not be for an Annual Register; and who, indeed, could wish that this had been otherwise? The volumes succeeded each other at irregular intervals; there was soon felt the want of one ever active presiding spirit; and though the work was continued during a long series of years, it never was the source of anything but anxiety and disappointment to its original projectors.

I am tempted, as Scott's Essay on Judicial Reform has never been included in any collection of his

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writings, to extract here a few specimens of a composition which appears to be as characteristic of the man as any that ever proceeded from his pen. His deep jealousy of the national honour of Scotland, his fear lest the course of innovation at this time threatened should end in a total assimilation of her Jurisprudence to the system of the more powerful sister country, and his habitual and deep-rooted dread of change in matters affecting the whole machinery of social existence, are expressed in, among others, the following passages:—

"An established system is not to be tried by those tests which may with perfect correctness be applied to a new theory. A civilized nation, long in possession of a code of law, under which, with all its inconveniences, they have found means to flourish, is not to be regarded as an infant colony, on which experiments in legislation may, without much charge of presumption, be hazarded. A philosopher is not entitled to investigate such a system by those ideas which he has fixed in his own mind as the standard of possible excellence. The only unerring test of every old establishment is the *effect* it has actually produced; for that must be held to be good, from whence good is derived. The people have, by degrees, moulded their habits to the law they are compelled to obey; for some of its imperfections, remedies have been found; to others they have reconciled themselves; till, at last, they have, from various causes, attained the object which the most sanguine visionary could promise to himself from his own perfect *unembodied* system. Let us not be understood to mean, that a superstitious regard for antiquity ought to stay the hand of a temperate reform. But the task is delicate, and full of dan-

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ger; perilous in its execution, and extremely doubtful in its issue. Is there not rational ground to apprehend, that, in attempting to eradicate the disease, the sound part of the constitution may be essentially injured? Can we be quite certain that less inconvenience will result from that newly discovered and unknown remedy, than from the evil, which the juices and humours with which it has long been incorporated may have neutralized?—that, after a thorough reformation has been achieved, it may not be found necessary to counterwork the antidote itself, by having recourse to the very error we have incautiously abjured? We are taught, by great authority, that 'possibly they may espy something that may, in truth, be mischievous in some particular case, but weigh not how many inconveniences are, on the other side, prevented or remedied by that which is the supposed vicious strictness of the law; and he that purchases a reformation of a law with the introduction of greater inconveniences, by the amotion of a mischief, makes an ill bargain. No human law can be absolutely perfect. It is sufficient that it be best *ut plurimum;* and as to the mischiefs that it occasions, as they are accidental and casual, so they may be oftentimes, by due care, prevented, without an alteration of the main.'*

"Every great reform, we farther conceive, ought to be taken at a point somewhat lower than the necessity seems to require. Montesquieu has a chapter, of which the title is, *Qu'il ne faut pas tout corriger.* Our improvement ought to contain within itself a principle of progressive improvement. We are thus enabled to see our way distinctly before us; we have, at the same time, under our eyes, the ancient malady, with the palliatives by which the hand of time has controlled its natural symptoms, and the effects arising from the process intended to remove it; and our course, whether we advance or recede, will be safe, and confident, and honourable; whereas, by taking our reform at the

* Lord Hale on the Amendment of the Laws.

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utmost possible stretch of the wrong complained of, we cannot fail to bring into disrepute the order of things, as established, without any corresponding certainty that our innovations will produce the result which our sanguine hopes have anticipated; and we thus deprive ourselves of the chance of a secure retreat, in the event of our failure."

Nor does the following paragraph on the proposal for extending to Scotland the system of *Jury Trial* in civil actions *of all classes*, appear to me less characteristic of Scott: —

"We feel it very difficult to associate with this subject any idea of political or personal liberty; both of which have been supposed to be secured, and even to be rendered more valuable, by means of the trial by jury in questions of private right. It is perhaps owing to our want of information, or to the phlegm and frigidity of our national character, that we cannot participate in that enthusiasm which the very name of this institution is said to excite in many a patriotic bosom. We can listen to the cabalistic sound of Trial by Jury, which has produced effects only to be paralleled by those of the mysterious words uttered by the Queen of the City of Enchantments, in the Arabian Tale, and retain the entire possession of our form and senses. We understand that sentiment of a celebrated author, that this barrier against the usurpation of power, in matters where power has any concern, may probably avert from our island the fate of many states that now exist but in history; and we think this great possession is peculiarly valuable in Scotland, where the privileges of the public prosecutor are not controlled by those of a grand jury. The merits of the establishment we are now examining are to be ascertained by a different test. It is merely a contri-

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vance for attaining the ends of private justice, for developing the merits of a civil question in which individuals are interested, and that contrivance is the best, which most speedily and effectually serves the purpose for which it was framed. In causes of that description, no shield is necessary against the invasion of power; the issue is to be investigated without leaning or partiality, for whatever is unduly given to one party is unduly wrested from the other; and unless we take under our consideration those advantages which time or accident may have introduced, we see not what superiority can in the abstract be supposed to belong to this as a judicature for the determination of all or the greater number of civil actions. We discover no ground for suspecting that the judgments of a few well-educated and upright men may be influenced by any undue bias; that an interest merely patrimonial, if more safely lodged in an obscure and evanescent body than in a dignified, independent, and permanent tribunal, versed in the science to be administered, and responsible for the decisions they pronounce; — and we suspect that a philosopher, contemplating both in his closet, will augur more danger from a system which devolves on one set of men the responsibility of doctrines taught them by another, than from that system which attaches to the judges all the consequences of the law they deliver."

Some, though not all, of the changes deprecated in this Essay, had been adopted by the Legislature before it was published; others of them have since been submitted to experiment; and I believe that, on the whole, his views may safely bear the test to which time has exposed them — though as to the particular point of *trial by jury in civil causes*, the dreaded innovation, being conducted by wise and temperate hands, has in its results proved satisfactory

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to the people at large, as well as to the Bench and the Bar of Scotland. I have, however, chiefly introduced the above extracts as illustrative of the dissatisfaction with which Scott considered the commencement of a *system* of jurisprudential innovation; and though it must not be forgotten that his own office as a Clerk of Session had never yet brought him anything but labour, and that he consequently complained from time to time of the inroads this labour made on hours which might otherwise have been more profitably bestowed, I suspect his antipathy to this new system, as a system, had no small share in producing the state of mind indicated in a remarkable letter addressed, in the later part of this year, to his brother Thomas. The other source of uneasiness to which it alludes has been already touched upon—and we shall have but too much of it hereafter. He says to his brother (Ashestiel, 1st November 1810), "I have no objection to tell you in confidence, that, were Dundas to go out Governor-General to India, and were he willing to take me with him in a good situation, I would not hesitate to pitch the Court of Session and the booksellers to the Devil, and try my fortune in another climate." He adds, "but this is strictly *entre nous*"—nor indeed was I aware, until I found this letter, that he had ever entertained such a design as that which it communicates. Mr Dundas (now Lord Melville), being

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deeply conversant in our Eastern affairs, and highly acceptable to the Court of Directors in the office of President of the Board of Control, which he had long filled, was spoken of, at various times in the course of his public life, as likely to be appointed Governor-General of India. He had, no doubt, hinted to Scott, that in case he should ever assume that high station it would be very agreeable for him to be accompanied by his early friend: and there could be little question of his capacity to have filled with distinction the part either of an Indian secretary or of an Indian judge.

But, though it is easy to account for his expressing in so marked a manner at this particular period his willingness to relinquish literature as the main occupation of his time; it is impossible to consider the whole course of his correspondence and conversation, without agreeing in the conclusion of Mr Morritt, that he was all along sincere in the opinion that literature ought never to be ranked on the same scale of importance with the conduct of business in any of the great departments of public life. This opinion he always expressed; and I have no doubt that, at any period preceding his acquisition of a landed property, he would have acted on it, even to the extent of leaving Scotland, had a suitable opportunity been afforded him to give that evidence of his sincerity. This is so remarkable a

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feature in his character, that the reader will forgive me should I recur to it in the sequel.

At the same time I have no notion that at this or any other period he contemplated abandoning literature. Such a thought would hardly enter the head of the man, not yet forty years of age, whose career had been one of unbroken success, and whose third great work had just been received with a degree of favour, both critical and popular, altogether unprecedented in the annals of his country. His hope, no doubt, was that an honourable official station in the East might afford him both a world of new materials for poetry, and what would in his case be abundance of leisure for turning them to account, according to the deliberate dictates of his own judgment. What he desired to escape from was not the exertion of his genius, which must ever have been to him the source of his most exquisite enjoyment, but the daily round of prosaic and perplexing toils in which his connexion with the Ballantynes had involved him. He was able to combine the regular discharge of such functions with the exercise of the high powers of imagination, in a manner of which history affords no other example; yet many, no doubt, were the weary hours, when he repented him of the rash engagements which had imposed such a burden of mere taskwork on his energies. But his external position, before the lapse

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of another year, underwent a change, which for ever fixed his destiny to the soil of his best affections and happiest inspirations.

The letters of Scott to all his friends have sufficiently shown the unflagging interest with which, among all his personal labours and anxieties, he watched the progress of the great contest in the Peninsula. It was so earnest, that he never on any journey, not even in his very frequent passages between Edinburgh and Ashestiel, omitted to take with him the largest and best map he had been able to procure of the seat of war; upon this he was perpetually poring, tracing the marches and counter-marches of the French and English by means of black and white pins; and not seldom did Mrs Scott complain of this constant occupation of his attention and her carriage. In the beginning of 1811, a committee was formed in London to collect subscriptions for the relief of the Portuguese, who had seen their lands wasted, their vines torn up, and their houses burnt in the course of Massena's last unfortunate campaign; and Scott, on reading the advertisement, immediately addressed Mr Whitmore, the chairman, begging that the committee would allow him to contribute to their fund the profits, to whatever they might amount, of a poem which he proposed to write upon a subject connected with the localities of the patriotic struggle. His offer was of

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course accepted; and "THE VISION OF DON RODERICK" was begun as soon as the Spring vacation enabled him to retire to Ashestiel.

On the 26th of April he writes thus to Mr Morritt, who had lost a dear young friend in the battle of Barossa: —

"I rejoice with the heart of a Scotsman in the success of Lord Wellington, and with all the pride of a seer to boot. I have been for three years proclaiming him as the only man we had to trust to — a man of talent and genius — not deterred by obstacles, not fettered by prejudices, not immured within the pedantries of his profession — but playing the general and the hero, when most of our military commanders would have exhibited the drill sergeant, or at best the adjutant. These campaigns will teach us what we have long needed to know, that success depends not on the nice drilling of regiments, but upon the grand movements and combinations of an army. We have been hitherto polishing hinges, when we should have studied the mechanical union of a huge machine. Now — our army begin to see that the *grand secret*, as the French call it, consists only in union, joint exertion, and concerted movement. This will enable us to meet the dogs on fair terms as to numbers, and for the rest, 'My soul and body on the action both.'

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" The downfal of Buonaparte's military fame will be the signal of his ruin, and, if we may trust the reports this day brings us from Holland, there is glorious mischief on foot already. I hope we shall be able to fling fuel into the flame immediately. A country with so many dykes and ditches must be fearfully tenable when the peasants are willing to fight. How I should enjoy the disconsolate visages of those Whig dogs, those dwellers upon the Isthmus, who have been foretelling the rout and ruin which it only required their being in power to have achieved! It is quite plain, from Sir Robert Wilson's account, that they neglected to feed the lamp of Russia, and it only resulted from their want of opportunity that they did not quench the smoking flax in the Peninsula — a thought so profligate, that those who from party or personal interest, indulged it ought to pray for mercy, and return thanks for the providential interruption which obstructed their purpose, as they would for a meditated but prevented parricide. But enough of the thorny subject of politics.

" I grieve for your loss at Barossa, but what more glorious fall could a man select for himself or friend, than dying with his sword in hand and the cry of victory in his ears?

" As for my own operations they are very trifling, though sufficiently miscellaneous. I have been writing a sketch of Buonaparte's tactics for the Edin-

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burgh Register, and some other trumpery of the same kind. Particularly I meditate some wild stanzas referring to the Peninsula: if I can lick them into any shape I hope to get something handsome from the booksellers for the Portuguese sufferers: 'Silver and gold have I none, but that which I have I will give unto them.' My lyrics are called the Vision of Don Roderick: you remember the story of the last Gothic King of Spain descending into an enchanted cavern to know the fate of the Moorish invasion—that is my machinery. Pray don't mention this, for some one will snatch up the subject, as I have been served before: and I have not written a line yet. I am going to Ashestiel for eight days, to fish and rhyme."

The poem was published, in 4to, in July; and the immediate proceeds were forwarded to the board in London. His friend the Earl of Dalkeith seems to have been a member of the committee, and he writes thus to Scott on the occasion:—"Those with ample fortunes and thicker heads may easily give 100 guineas to a subscription, but the man is really to be envied who can draw that sum from his own brains, and apply the produce so beneficially and to so exalted a purpose."

In the original preface to this poem, Scott alludes to two events which had "cruelly interrupted his

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task"—the successive deaths of his kind friend the Lord President of the Court of Session (Blair),* and his early patron, Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville: and his letters at the time afford additional evidence of the shock his feelings had thus sustained.—

The following, to Mrs Scott of Harden, is dated May 20th, 1811:—

"My Dear Madam,

"We are deprived of the prospect of waiting upon you on the birth-day, by the confusion into which the business of this court is thrown by the most unexpected and irreparable loss which it has sustained in the death of the President. It is scarcely possible to conceive a calamity which is more universally or will be so long felt by the country. His integrity and legal knowledge, joined to a peculiar dignity of thought, action, and expression, had begun to establish in the minds of the public at large that confidence in the regular and solemn administration of justice, which is so necessary to its usefulness and respectability. My official situation, as well as the private intimacy of our families, makes me a sincere mourner on this melancholy occasion, for I feel

* The Right Hon. Robert Blair of Avontoun, son of the Author of "The Grave."

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a severe personal deprivation, besides the general share of sorrow common to all of every party or description who were in the way of witnessing his conduct.

"He was a rare instance of a man whose habits were every way averse to the cultivation of popularity, rising, nevertheless, to the highest point in the public opinion, by the manly and dignified discharge of his duty. I have been really so much shocked and out of spirits, yesterday and the day preceding, that I can write and think of nothing else.

"I have to send you the Vision of Don Roderick, as soon as we can get it out—it is a trifle I have written to eke out the subscription for the suffering Portuguese. Believe me, my dear Mrs Scott, ever yours most truly and respectfully,

WALTER SCOTT."

The next letter is to Mr Morritt, who, like himself, had enjoyed a large share of Lord Melville's friendly regard; and had more than once met his Lordship, after his fall, at the Poet's house, in Castle Street; where, by the way, the old Statesman entered with such simple-heartedness into all the ways of the happy circle, that it had come to be an established rule for the children *to sit up to supper* whenever Lord Melville dined there.

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" Edinburgh, July 1, 1811.

" My Dear M.

" I have this moment got your kind letter, just as I was packing up Don Roderick for you. This patriotic puppet-show has been finished under wretched auspices; poor Lord Melville's death so quickly succeeding that of President Blair, one of the best and wisest judges that ever distributed justice, broke my spirit sadly. My official situation placed me in daily contact with the President, and his ability and candour were the source of my daily admiration. As for poor dear Lord Melville, ' 'Tis vain to name him whom we mourn in vain.' Almost the last time I saw him, he was talking of you in the highest terms of regard, and expressing great hopes of again seeing you at Dunira this summer, where I proposed to attend you. *Hei mihi! quid hei mihi? humana perpessi sumus.* His loss will be long and severely felt here, and Envy is already paying her cold tribute of applause to the worth which she maligned while it walked upon earth.

" There is a very odd coincidence between the deaths of these eminent characters, and that of a very inferior person, a dentist of this city, named Dubisson. He met the President before his death, who used a particular expression in speaking to him: the day before Lord Melville died, he also

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met Dubisson nearly on the same spot, and to the man's surprise used the President's very words in saluting him. On this second death, he expressed (jocularly, however) an apprehension that he himself would be the third—was taken ill and died in an hour's space. Was not this remarkable? Yours ever, W. S."

The Vision of Don Roderick had features of novelty, both as to the subject and the manner of the composition, which excited much attention, and gave rise to some sharp controversy. The main fable was indeed from the most picturesque region of old romance; but it was made throughout the vehicle of feelings directly adverse to those with which the Whig critics had all along regarded the interference of Britain in behalf of the nations of the Peninsula; and the silence which, while celebrating our other generals on that scene of action, had been preserved with respect to Scott's own gallant countryman, Sir John Moore, was considered or represented by them as an odious example of genius hoodwinked by the influence of party. Nor were there wanting persons who affected to discover that the charm of Scott's poetry had to a great extent evaporated under the severe test to which he had exposed it, by adopting, in place of those comparatively light

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and easy measures in which he had hitherto dealt, the most elaborate one that our literature exhibits. The production, notwithstanding the complexity of the Spenserian stanza, had been very rapidly executed; and it shows, accordingly, many traces of negligence. But the patriotic inspiration of it found an echo in the vast majority of British hearts; many of the Whig oracles themselves acknowledged that the difficulties of the metre had been on the whole successfully overcome; and even the hardest critics were compelled to express unqualified admiration of various detached pictures and passages, which, in truth, as no one now disputes, neither he nor any other poet ever excelled. The whole setting or framework — whatever relates in short to the last of the Goths himself — was, I think, even then unanimously pronounced admirable; and no party feeling could blind any man to the heroic splendour of such stanzas as those in which the three equally gallant elements of a British army are contrasted. I incline to believe that the choice of the measure had been in no small degree the result of those hints which Scott received on the subject of his favourite octosyllabics, more especially from Ellis and Canning; and, as we shall see presently, he about this time made more than one similar experiment, in all likelihood from the same motive.

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Of the letters which reached him in consequence of the appearance of The Vision, he has preserved several, which had no doubt interested and gratified him at the time. One of these was from Lady Wellington, to whom he had never had the honour of being presented, but who could not, as she said, remain silent on the receipt of such a tribute to the fame of "the first and best of men." Ever afterwards she continued to correspond with him, and indeed, among the very last letters which the Duchess of Wellington appears to have written, was a most affecting one, bidding him farewell, and thanking him for the solace his works had afforded her during her fatal illness. Another was in these terms:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Hinckley, July 26, 1811.

"My Dear Sir,

"I am very glad that you have essayed a new metre—new I mean for you to use. That which you have chosen is perhaps at once the most artificial and the most magnificent that our language affords; and your success in it ought to encourage you to believe, that for you, at least, the majestic march of Dryden (to my ear the perfection of harmony) is

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not, as you seem to pronounce it, irrecoverable. Am I wrong in imagining that *Spenser* does not use the *plusquam-Alexandrine*—the verse which is as much longer than an Alexandrine, as an Alexandrine is longer than an ordinary heroic measure? I have no books where I am, to which to refer. You use this—and in the first stanza.

"Your poem has been met on my part by an exchange somewhat like that of Diomed's armour against Glaucus's—brass for gold—a heavy speech upon bullion. If you have never thought upon the subject—as to my great contentment I never had a twelvemonth ago—let me counsel you to keep clear of it, and forthwith put my speech into the fire, unread. It has no one merit but that of sincerity. I formed my opinion most reluctantly; having formed it, I could not but maintain it; having maintained it in Parliament, I wished to record it intelligibly. But it is one which, so far from cherishing and wishing to make proselytes to, I would much rather renounce, if I could find a person to convince me that it is erroneous. This is at least an unusual state of mind in controversy. It is such as I do not generally profess on all subjects—such as you will give me credit for not being able to maintain, for instance, when either the exploits which you celebrate in your last poem, or your manner of celebrating them, are disputed or disparaged. Believe

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me, with great regard and esteem, very sincerely yours, GEORGE CANNING."

But, of all the letters addressed to the author of the Vision of Don Roderick, I am very sure no one was so welcome as that which reached him, some months after his poem had ceased to be new in England, from a dear friend of his earliest days, who, after various chances and changes of life, was then serving in Lord Wellington's army, as a captain in the 58th regiment. I am sure that Sir Adam Fergusson's good-nature will pardon my inserting here some extracts from a communication which his affectionate schoolfellow very often referred to in after years with the highest appearance of interest and pleasure.

"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Lisbon, 31st August 1811.

"My Dear Walter,

"After such a length of silence between us, and, I grant on my part, so unwarrantable, I think I see your face of surprise on recognising this MS., and hear you exclaim — What strange wind has blown a letter from *Linton?* I must say, that although both you and my good friend Mrs S. must

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long ago have set me down as a most indifferent, not to say ungrateful sort of gentleman, far otherwise has been the case, as in the course of my wanderings through this country, I have often beguiled a long march, or watchful night's duty, by thinking on the merry fireside in North Castle Street. However, the irregular roving life we lead, always interfered with my resolves of correspondence.

"But now, quitting self, I need not tell you how greatly I was delighted at the success of the Lady of the Lake. I dare say you are by this time well tired of such greetings—so I shall only say, that last spring I was so fortunate as to get a reading of it, when in the lines of Torres Vedras, and thought I had no inconsiderable right to enter into and judge of its beauties, having made one of the party on your first visit to the Trossachs; and you will allow, that a little vanity on my part on this account (every thing considered), was natural enough. While the book was in my possession, I had nightly invitations to *evening parties!* to read and illustrate passages of it; and I must say that (though not conscious of much merit in the way of recitation) my attempts to do justice to the grand opening of the stag-hunt, were always followed with bursts of applause—for this Canto was the favourite among the rough sons of the fighting Third Division. At that time supplies of various kinds, especially anything in the way of

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delicacies, were very scanty; and, in gratitude, I am bound to declare, that to the good offices of the Lady I owed many a nice slice of ham, and rummer of hot punch, which, I assure you, were amongst the most welcome favours that one officer could bestow on another, during the long rainy nights of last January and February. By desire of my mess-mates of the Black-cuffs, I some time ago sent a commission to London for a copy of the music of the Boat-Song, 'Hail to the Chief,' as performed at Covent-Garden, but have not yet got it. If you can assist in this, I need not say that on every performance a flowing bumper will go round to the Bard. We have lately been fortunate in getting a good master to our band, who is curious in old Scotch and Irish airs, and has harmonized *Johnny Cope*, &c. &c. . . . . .

"Lisbon, 6th October.

"I had written all the foregoing botheration, intending to send it by a wounded friend going home to Scotland, when, to my no small joy, your parcel, enclosing Don Roderick, reached me. How kind I take it your remembering old Linton in this way. A day or two after I received yours, I was sent into the Alentejo, where I remained a month, and only returned a few days ago, much delighted with the trip. You wish to know how I like the Vision;

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but as you can't look for any learned critique from me. I shall only say that I fully entered into the spirit and beauty of it, and that I relished much the wild and fanciful opening of the introductory part; yet what particularly delighted me were the stanzas announcing the approach of the British fleets and armies to this country, and the three delighful ones descriptive of the different troops, English, Scotch, and Irish; and I can assure you the Pats are, to a man, enchanted with the picture drawn of their countrymen, and the mention of the great man himself. Your swearing, in the true character of a minstrel, 'shiver my harp, and burn its every chord.' amused me not a little. From being well acquainted with a great many of the situations described, they had of course the more interest, and 'Grim Busaco's iron ridge' most happily paints the appearance of that memorable field. You must know that we have got with us some bright geniuses, natives of the *dear country*, and who go by the name of 'the poets.' Of course, a present of this kind is not thrown away upon indifferent subjects, but it is read and repeated with all the enthusiasm your warmest wish could desire. Should it be my fate to survive. I am resolved to try my hand on a snug little farm either up or down the Tweed, somewhere in your neighbourhood; and on this dream many a delightful castle do I build.

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"I am most happy to hear that the Club* goes on in the old smooth style. I am afraid, however, that now * * * * * has become a judge, the delights of *Scrogum* and *The Tailor* will be lost, till revived perhaps by the old croupier in the shape of a battered half-pay officer. Yours affectionately,

ADAM FERGUSSON."

More than one of the gallant captain's *chateaux en Espagne* were, as we shall see, realized in the sequel. I must not omit a circumstance which had reached Scott from another source, and which he always took special pride in relating, namely, that in the course of the day when the Lady of the Lake first reached Sir Adam Fergusson, he was posted with his company on a point of ground exposed to the enemy's artillery; somewhere no doubt on the lines of Torres Vedras. The men were ordered to lie prostrate on the ground; while they kept that attitude, the Captain, kneeling at their head, read aloud the description of the battle in Canto VI., and the listening soldiers only interrupted him by a joyous huzza, whenever the French shot struck the bank close above them.

The only allusion which I have found, in Scott's

* See *ante*, vol. i. p. 288.

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letters, to the Edinburgh Review on his Vision, occurs in a letter to Mr Morritt (26th September 1811), which also contains the only hint of his having been about this time requested to undertake the task of rendering into English the *Charlemagne* of Lucien Buonaparte. He says—"The Edinburgh Reviewers have been down on my poor Don hand to fist; but, truly, as they are too fastidious to approve of the campaign, I should be very unreasonable if I expected them to like the celebration of it I agree with them, however, as to the lumbering weight of the stanza, and I shrewdly suspect it would require a very great poet indeed to prevent the tedium arising from the recurrence of rhymes. Our language is unable to support the expenditure of so many for each stanza: even Spenser himself, with all the license of using obsolete words and uncommon spellings, sometimes fatigues the ear. They are also very wroth with me for omitting the merits of Sir John Moore; but as I never exactly discovered in what these lay, unless in conducting his advance and retreat upon a plan the most likely to verify the desponding speculations of the foresaid reviewers, I must hold myself excused for not giving praise where I was unable to see that much was due. The only literary news I have to send you is, that Lucien Buonaparte's epic, in twenty-four *chants*, is about to

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appear. An application was made to me to translate it, which I negatived of course, and that roundly."*

I have alluded to some other new experiments in versification about this time as probably originating in the many hints of Ellis, Canning, and probably of Erskine, that, if he wished to do himself full justice in poetical narration, he ought to attempt at least the rhyme of Dryden's Fables. Having essayed the most difficult of all English measures in Don Roderick, he this year tried also the heroic couplet, and produced that imitation of Crabbe, *The Poacher*—on seeing which, Crabbe, as his son's biography tells us, exclaimed, "This man, whoever he is, can do all that I can, and *something more*." This piece, together with some verses, afterwards worked up into the Bridal of Triermain, and another fragment in imitation of Moore's Lyrics, when first forwarded to Ballantyne, were accompanied with a little note, in which he says—"Understand I have no idea of parody, but serious imitation, if I can accomplish it. The subject for my Crabbe is a character in his line which he has never touched. I think of Wordsworth, too, and perhaps a ghost story after Lewis. I should be ambitious of trying Campbell; but his peculiarity

* The ponderous epic entitled, *Charlemagne ou l'Eglise Delivrée*, was published in 1814; and an English version, by the Rev. S. Butler and the Rev. F. Hodgson, appeared in 1815. 2 vols. 4to.

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consists so much in the matter, and so little in the manner, that (to his praise be it spoken), I rather think I cannot touch him." The three imitations which he did execute appeared in the Edinburgh Register for 1809, published in the autumn of 1811. They were there introduced by a letter entitled The Inferno of Altisidora, in which he shadows out the chief reviewers of the day, especially his friends Jeffrey and Gifford, with admirable breadth and yet lightness of pleasantry. He kept his secret as to this Inferno, and all its appendages, even from Miss Baillie — to whom he says, on their appearace, that — "the imitation of Crabbe had struck him as good; that of Moore as bad; and that of himself as beginning well, but falling off grievously to the close." He seems to have been equally mysterious as to an imitation of the quaint love verses of the beginning of the 17th century, which had found its way shortly before into the newspapers, under the name of The Resolve;* but I find him acknowledging its parentage to his brother Thomas, whose sagacity had at once guessed at the truth. "As to the Resolve," he says, "it is mine; and it is not — or, to be less enigmatical, it is an old fragment, which I coopered up into its present state with the purpose of quizzing certain judges of poetry, who have been extremely

* See *Poetical Works*, Edition 1834, vol. viii. p. 374.

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delighted, and declare that no living poet could write in the same exquisite taste." These critics were his Friends of the Friday Club. When included in the Register, however, the Resolve had his name affixed to it. In that case his concealment had already answered its purpose. It is curious to trace the beginnings of the systematic mystification which he afterwards put in practice with regard to the most important series of his works.

The quarto edition of Don Roderick having rapidly gone off, instead of reprinting the poem as usual in a separate octavo, he inserted it entire in the current volume of the Register; a sufficient proof how much that undertaking was already felt to require extraordinary exertion on the part of its proprietors. Among other minor tasks of the same year, he produced an edition of Wilson's Secret History of the Court of King James I., in two vols. 8vo, to which he supplied a copious preface, and a rich body of notes. He also contributed two or three articles to the Quarterly Review.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

New Arrangement concerning the Clerks of Session — Scott's first purchase of Land — Abbotsford; Turn-again, &c. — Joanna Baillie's Orra, &c. — Death of James Grahame — and of John Leyden.

1811.

THROUGHOUT 1811, Scott's serious labour continued to be bestowed on the advancing edition of Swift; but this and all other literary tasks were frequently interrupted in consequence of an important step which he took early in the year; namely, the purchase of the first portion of what became in the sequel an extensive landed property in Roxburghshire. He had now the near prospect of coming into the beneficial use of the office he had so long

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filled without emolument in the Court of Session. For, connected with the other reforms in the Scotch judicature, was a plan for allowing the retirement of functionaries, who had served to an advanced period of life, upon pensions; should this meet the approbation of parliament, there was little doubt that Mr George Home would avail himself of the opportunity to resign the place of which he had for five years executed none of the duties; and the second Lord Melville, who had now succeeded his father as the virtual Minister for Scotland, had so much at heart a measure in itself obviously just and prudent, that little doubt could be entertained of the result of his efforts in its behalf. The Clerks of Session, it had been already settled, were henceforth to be paid not by fees, but by fixed salaries; the amount of each salary, it was soon after arranged, should be £1300 per annum; and contemplating a speedy accession of professional income so considerable as this, and at the same time a vigorous prosecution of his literary career, Scott fixed his eyes on a small farm within a few miles of Ashestiel, which it was understood would presently be in the market, and resolved to place himself by its acquisition in the situation to which he had probably from his earliest days looked forward as the highest object of ambition, that of a Tweedside Laird. — *Sit mihi sedes utinam senectæ!*

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And the place itself, though not to the general observer a very attractive one, had long been one of peculiar interest for him. I have often heard him tell, that when travelling in his boyhood with his father, from Selkirk to Melrose, the old man suddenly desired the carriage to halt at the foot of an eminence, and said, "We must get out here, Walter, and see a thing quite in your line." His father then conducted him to a rude stone on the edge of an acclivity about half a mile above the Tweed at Abbotsford, which marks the spot—

> "Where gallant Cessford's life-blood dear
> Reeked on dark Elliott's border spear."

This was the conclusion of the battle of Melrose, fought in 1526, between the Earls of Angus and Home, and the two chiefs of the race of Kerr on the one side, and Buccleuch on the other, in sight of the young King James V., the possession of whose person was the object of the contest. This battle is often mentioned in the Border Minstrelsy, and the reader will find a long note on it, under the lines which I have just quoted from the Lay of the Last Minstrel. In the names of various localities between Melrose and Abbotsford, such as *Skirmish-field*, *Charge-Law*, and so forth, the incidents of the fight have found a lasting record; and the spot where

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the retainer of Buccleuch terminated the pursuit of the victors by the mortal wound of Kerr of Cessford (ancestor of the Dukes of Roxburghe), has always been called *Turn-again*. In his own future domain the young minstrel had before him the scene of the last great Clan-battle of the Borders.

On the 12th of May 1811, he writes to James Ballantyne, apologizing for some delay about proof-sheets. "My attention," he adds, "has been a little dissipated by considering a plan for my own future comfort, which I hasten to mention to you. My lease of Ashestiel is out — I now sit a tenant at will under a heavy rent, and at all the inconvenience of one when in the house of another. I have, therefore, resolved to purchase a piece of ground sufficient for a cottage and a few fields. There are two pieces, either of which would suit me, but both would make a very desirable property indeed. They stretch along the Tweed, near half-way between Melrose and Selkirk, on the opposite side from Lord Somerville, and could be had for between £7000 and £8000 — or either separate for about half the sum. I have serious thoughts of one or both, and must have recourse to my pen to make the matter easy. The worst is the difficulty which John might find in advancing so large a sum as the copyright of a new poem; supposing it to be made payable within a year at farthest

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from the work going to press,—which would be essential to my purpose. Yet the Lady of the Lake came soon home. I have a letter this morning giving me good hope of my Treasury business being carried through: if this takes place, I will buy both the little farms, which will give me a mile of the beautiful turn of Tweed, above Gala-foot—if not, I will confine myself to one. As my income, in the event supposed, will be very considerable, it will afford a sinking fund to clear off what debt I may incur in making this purchase. It is proper John and you should be as soon as possible apprized of these my intentions, which I believe you will think reasonable in my situation, and at my age, while I may yet hope to sit under the shade of a tree of my own planting. I shall not, I think, want any pecuniary assistance beyond what I have noticed, but of course my powers of rendering it will be considerably limited for a time. I hope this Register will give a start to its predecessors; I assure you I shall spare no pains. John must lend his earnest attention to clear his hands of the quire stock, and to taking in as little as he can unless in the way of exchange; in short, reefing our sails, which are at present too much spread for our ballast."

He alludes in the same letter to a change in the firm of Messrs Constable, which John Ballantyne

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had just announced to him; and, although some of his prognostications on this business were not exactly fulfilled, I must quote his expressions for the light they throw on his opinion of Constable's temper and character. "No association," he says, "of the kind Mr C. proposes, will stand two years with him for its head. His temper is too haughty to bear with the complaints, and to answer all the minute enquiries, which partners of that sort will think themselves entitled to make, and expect to have answered. Their first onset, however, will be terrible, and John must be prepared to lie by. . . . . The new poem would help the presses." The new partners to which he refers were Mr Robert Cathcart of Drum, Writer to the Signet, a gentleman of high worth and integrity, who continued to be connected with Constable's business until his death in November 1812; and Mr Robert Cadell, who afterwards married Mr Constable's eldest daughter.*

Of the two adjoining farms, both of which he had at this time thought of purchasing, he shortly afterwards made up his mind that one would be sufficient to begin with; and he selected that nearest to

* This union was dissolved by the death of the lady within a year of the marriage. Mr Cadell, not long after the catastrophe of 1826, became sole publisher of Scott's later works.

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Ashestiel, and comprising the scene of Cessford's slaughter. The person from whom he bought it was an old friend of his own, whose sterling worth he venerated, and whose humorous conversation rendered him an universal favourite among the gentry of the Forest — the late Rev. Dr Robert Douglas, minister of Galashiels — the same man to whom Mrs Cockburn described the juvenile prodigy of George's Square, in November 1777. Dr Douglas had never resided on the property, and his efforts to embellish it had been limited to one stripe of firs, so long and so narrow that Scott likened it to a black hair-comb. It ran from the precincts of the homestead towards *Turn-again*, and has bequeathed the name of *the Doctor's redding-kame* to the mass of nobler trees amidst which its dark straight line can now hardly be traced. The farm consisted of a rich meadow or haugh along the banks of the river, and about a hundred acres of undulated ground behind, all in a neglected state, undrained, wretchedly enclosed, much of it covered with nothing better than the native heath. The farm-house itself was small and poor, with a common *kail-yard* on one flank, and a staring barn of the Doctor's erection on the other; while in front appeared a filthy pond covered with ducks and duckweed, from which the whole tenement had derived the unharmonious designation of *Clarty Hole*. But the Tweed was everything to him — a beautiful

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river, flowing broad and bright over a bed of milk-white pebbles, unless here and there where it darkened into a deep pool, overhung as yet only by the birches and alders which had survived the statelier growth of the primitive Forest; and the first hour that he took possession he claimed for his farm the name of the adjoining *ford*, situated just above the influx of the classical tributary Gala. As might be guessed from the name of *Abbotsford*, these lands had all belonged of old to the great abbey of Melrose; and indeed the Duke of Buccleuch, as the territorial representative of that religious brotherhood, still retains some seignorial rights over them, and almost all the surrounding district. Another feature of no small interest in Scott's eyes was an ancient Roman road leading from the Eildon hills to this ford, the remains of which, however, are now mostly sheltered from view amidst his numerous plantations. The most graceful and picturesque of all the monastic ruins in Scotland, the Abbey of Melrose itself, is visible from many points in the immediate neighbourhood of the house; and last, not least, on the rising ground full in view across the river, the traveller may still observe the chief traces of that ancient British barrier, the *Catrail*, of which the reader has seen frequent mention in Scott's early letters to Ellis, when investigating the antiquities of Reged and Strathclyde.

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Such was the territory on which Scott's prophetic eye already beheld rich pastures, embosomed among flourishing groves, where his children's children should thank the founder. But the state of his feelings when he first called these fields his own, will be best illustrated by a few extracts from his letters. To his brother-in-law, Mr Carpenter, he thus writes, from Ashestiel, on the 5th of August—

"As my lease of this place is out, I have bought, for about £4000, a property in the neighbourhood, extending along the banks of the river Tweed for about half-a-mile. It is very bleak at present, having little to recommend it but the vicinity of the river; but as the ground is well adapted by nature to grow wood, and is considerably various in form and appearance, I have no doubt that by judicious plantations it may be rendered a very pleasant spot; and it is at present my great amusement to plan the various lines which may be necessary for that purpose. The farm comprehends about a hundred acres, of which I shall keep fifty in pasture and tillage, and plant all the rest, which will be a very valuable little possession in a few years, as wood bears a high price among us. I intend building a small cottage here for my summer abode, being obliged by law, as well as induced by inclination, to make this country my residence for some months every year. This is the

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greatest incident which has lately taken place in our domestic concerns, and I assure you we are not a little proud of being greeted as *laird* and *lady* of *Abbotsford*. We will give a grand gala when we take possession of it, and as we are very *clannish* in this corner, all the Scotts in the country, from the Duke to the peasant, shall dance on the green to the bagpipes, and drink whisky punch. Now as this happy festival is to be deferred for more than a twelvemonth, during which our cottage is to be built, &c. &c., what is there to hinder brother and sister Carpenter from giving us their company upon so gratifying an occasion? Pray, do not stay broiling yourself in India for a moment longer than you have secured comfort and competence. Don't look forward to *peace;* it will never come either in your day or mine."

The same week he says to Joanna Baillie—

"My dreams about my cottage go on; of about a hundred acres I have manfully resolved to plant from sixty to seventy; as to my scale of dwelling—why, you shall see my plan when I have adjusted it. My present intention is to have only two spare bed-rooms, with dressing-rooms, each of which will on a pinch have a couch bed; but I cannot relinquish my Border principle of accommodating all the cou-

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sins and *duniwastles*, who will rather sleep on chairs, and on the floor, and in the hay-loft, than be absent when folks are gathered together; and truly I used to think Ashestiel was very much like the tent of Periebanou, in the Arabian Nights, that suited alike all numbers of company equally; ten people fill it at any time, and I remember its lodging thirty-two without any complaint. As for the *go-about* folks, they generally pay their score one way or other; for you who are always in the way of seeing, and commanding, and selecting your society, are too fastidious to understand how a dearth of news may make anybody welcome that can tell one the current report of the day. If it is any pleasure to these stragglers to say I made them welcome as strangers, I am sure that costs me nothing — only I deprecate publication, and am now the less afraid of it that I think scarce any bookseller will be desperate enough to print a new Scottish tour. Besides, one has the pleasure to tell over all the stories that have bored your friends a dozen of times, with some degree of propriety. In short, I think, like a true Scotchman, that a stranger, unless he is very unpleasant indeed, usually brings a title to a welcome along with him; and to confess the truth, I do a little envy my old friend Abonhassan his walks on the bridge of Bagdad, and evening conversations, and suppers with the guests whom he was never to see again in his

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life: he never fell into a scrape till he met with the Caliph — and, thank God, no Caliphs frequent the brigg of Melrose, which will be my nearest Rialto at Abbotsford.

"I never heard of a stranger that utterly baffled all efforts to engage him in conversation, excepting one whom an acquaintance of mine met in a stage-coach. My friend,* who piqued himself on his talents for conversation, assailed this tortoise on all hands, but in vain, and at length descended to expostulation. 'I have talked to you, my friend, on all the ordinary subjects — literature, farming, merchandise — gaming, game-laws, horse-races — suits at law — politics, and swindling, and blasphemy, and philosophy — is there any one subject that you will favour me by opening upon?' The wight writhed his countenance into a grin — 'Sir,' said he, 'can you say anything clever about *bend leather?*' There, I own, I should have been as much non-plussed as my acquaintance; but upon any less abstruse subject, I think, in general, something may be made of a stranger, worthy of his clean sheets, and beef-steak, and glass of port. You, indeed, my dear friend, may suffer a little for me, as I should for you, when such a fortuitous acquaintance talks of the intercourse arising from our meeting as anything beyond the

* This friend was Mr William Clerk.

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effect of chance and civility: but these braggings break no bones, and are always a compliment to the person of whom the discourse is held, though the narrator means it to himself; for no one can suppose the affectation of intimacy can be assumed unless from an idea that it exalts the person who brags of it. My little folks are well, and I am performing the painful duty of hearing my little boy his Latin lesson every morning; painful, because my knowledge of the language is more familiar than grammatical, and because little Walter has a disconsolate yawn at intervals, which is quite irresistible, and has nearly cost me a dislocation of my jaws."

In answering the letter which announced the acquisition of Abbotsford, Joanna Baillie says, very prettily:—"Yourself and Mrs Scott, and the children, will feel sorry at leaving Ashestiel, which will long have a consequence, and be the object of kind feelings with many, from having once been the place of your residence. If I should ever be happy enough to be at Abbotsford, you must take me to see Ashestiel too. I have a kind of tenderness for it, as one has for a man's first wife, when you hear he has married a second." The same natural sentiment is expressed in a manner characteristically different, in a letter from the Ettrick Shepherd, of about the same date:—"Are you not sorry at leaving *auld*

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Ashestiel for *grude an' a'*, after having been at so much trouble and expense in making it a complete thing? Upon my word I was, on seeing it in the papers."

That Scott had many a pang in quitting a spot which had been the scene of so many innocent and noble pleasures, no one can doubt; but the desire of having a permanent abiding-place of his own, in his ancestorial district, had long been growing upon his mind; and, moreover, he had laboured in adorning Ashestiel, not only to gratify his own taste as a landscape gardener, but because he had for years been looking forward to the day when Colonel Russell* would return from India to claim possession of his romantic inheritance. And he was overpaid for all his exertions, when the gallant soldier sat down at length among the trees which an affectionate kinsman had pruned and planted in his absence. He retained, however, to the end of his life, a certain "tenderness of feeling" towards Ashestiel, which could not perhaps be better shadowed than in Joanna Baillie's similitude. It was not his first country residence — nor could its immediate landscape be said to equal the Vale of the Esk, either in actual picturesqueness, or (before Marmion) in dignity of association. But it was while occupying Ashestiel

* Now Major-General Sir James Russell, K.C.B.

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that he first enjoyed habitually the free presence of wild and solitary nature; and I shall here quote part of a letter, in which he alludes to his favourite wildernesses between Tweed and Yarrow, in language. to my mind, strongly indicative of the regrets and misgivings with which he must have taken his farewell wanderings over them in the summer and autumn of 1811.

Miss Baillie had then in the press a new volume of Tragedies, but had told her friend that the publication, for booksellers' reasons, would not take place until winter. He answers (August 24th)—"Were it possible for me to hasten the treat I expect by such a composition with you, I would promise to read the volume at the silence of noonday, upon the top of Minchmuir, or Windlestrawlaw. The hour is allowed, by those skilful in demonology, to be as full of witching as midnight itself; and I assure you, I have felt really oppressed with a sort of fearful loneliness, when looking around the naked and towering ridges of desolate barrenness, which is all the eye takes in from the top of such a mountain—the patches of cultivation being all hidden in the little glens and valleys—or only appearing to make one sensible how feeble and inefficient the efforts of art have been to contend with the genius of the soil. It is in such a scene that the unknown author of a fine, but unequal poem, called *Albania*, places the remark-

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able superstition which consists in hearing the noise of a chase, with the baying of the hounds, the throttling sobs of the deer, the hollos of a numerous band of huntsmen, and the 'hoofs thick beating on the hollow hill.' I have often repeated his verses with some sensations of awe in such a place, and I am sure yours would effect their purpose as completely." *

Miss Baillie sent him, as soon as it was printed, the book to which this communication refers; she told him it was to be her last publication, and that she was getting her knitting needles in order —

* The lines here alluded to — and which Scott delighted to repeat — are as follows: —

"Ere since, of old, the haughty thanes of Ross, —
So to the simple swain tradition tells, —
Were wont with clans, and ready vassals throng'd,
To wake the bounding stag, or guilty wolf,
There oft is heard, at midnight, or at noon,
Beginning faint, but rising still more loud,
And nearer, voice of hunters, and of hounds,
And horns, hoarse winded, blowing far and keen: —
Forthwith the hubbub multiplies; the gale
Labours with wilder shrieks, and rifer din
Of hot pursuit; the broken cry of deer
Mangled by throttling dogs; the shouts of men,
And hoofs, thick beating on the hollow hill.
Sudden the grazing heifer in the vale
Starts at the noise, and both the herdsman's ears
Tingle with inward dread. Aghast, he eyes
The mountains height, and all the ridges round,
Yet not one trace of living wight discerns,
Nor knows, o'erawed, and trembling as he stands,
To what, or whom, he owes his idle fear,
To ghost, to witch, to fairy, or to fiend;
But wonders, and no end of wondering finds."

Albania — reprinted in *Scottish Descriptive Poems* pp. 167, 168.

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meaning to begin her new course of industry with a purse, by way of return for his Iona brooch. The poetess mentioned, at the same time, that she had met the evening before with a Scotch lady who boasted that "she had once been Walter Scott's bedfellow." — "Don't start," adds Joanna; "it is thirty years since the irregularity took place, and she describes her old bedfellow as the drollest looking, entertaining little urchin that ever was seen. I told her that you are a great strong man, six feet high, but she does not believe me." In point of fact, the assigned date was a lady's one; for the irregularity in question occurred on board the Leith smack which conveyed Walter Scott to London on his way to Bath, when he was only four years of age A. D. 1775.

Miss Baillie's welcome volume contained, among others, her tragedy on the Passion of Fear; and Scott gives so much of himself in the letter acknowledging this present, that I must insert it at length.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"My Dear Friend,

"....It is too little to say I am enchanted with the said third volume, especially with the two

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first plays, which in every point not only sustain, but even exalt your reputation as a dramatist. The whole character of Orra is exquisitely supported as well as imagined, and the language distinguished by a rich variety of fancy, which I know no instance of excepting in Shakspeare. After I had read Orra twice to myself, Terry read it over to us a third time, aloud, and I have seldom seen a little circle so much affected as during the whole fifth act. I think it would act charmingly, omitting, perhaps, the baying of the hounds, which could not be happily imitated, and retaining only the blast of the horn and the halloo of the huntsmen at a distance. Only I doubt if we have now an actress that could carry through the mad scene in the fifth act, which is certainly one of the most sublime that ever were written. Yet I have a great quarrel with this beautiful drama, for you must know you have utterly destroyed a song of mine, precisely in the turn of your outlaw's ditty, and sung by persons in somewhat the same situation. I took out my unfortunate manuscript to look at it, but alas! it was the encounter of the iron and the earthen pitchers in the fable. I was clearly sunk, and the potsherds not worth gathering up. But only conceive that the chorus should have run thus *verbatim*—

'Tis mirk midnight with peaceful men,
With us 'tis dawn of day'—

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And again—

> 'Then boot and saddle, comrades boon,
> Nor wait the dawn of day.'*

"I think the Dream extremely powerful indeed, but I am rather glad we did not hazard the representation. It rests so entirely on Osterloo, that I am almost sure we must have made a bad piece of work of it. By-the-by, a story is told of an Italian buffoon, who had contrived to give his master, a petty prince of Italy, a good hearty ducking, and a fright to boot, to cure him of an ague; the treatment succeeded, but the potentate, by way of retaliation, had his audacious physician tried for treason, and condemned to lose his head; the criminal was brought forth, the priest heard his confession, and the poor jester knelt down to the block. Instead of wielding his axe, the executioner, as he had been instructed, threw a pitcher of water on the bare neck of the criminal; here the jest was to have terminated, but

* These lines were accordingly struck out of the outlaw's song in Rokeby. The verses of *Orra*, to which Scott alludes, are no doubt the following:

> "The wild fire dances on the fen,
> The red star sheds its ray,
> Up rouse ye, then, my merry men,
> It is our opening day," &c.
>
> *Plays on the Passions*, vol. iii. p. 44.

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poor Gonella was found dead on the spot. I believe the catastrophe is very possible.* The latter half of the volume I have not perused with the same attention, though I have devoured both the Comedy and the Beacon in a hasty manner. I think the approbation of the public will make you alter your intention of taking up the knitting-needle—and that I shall be as much to seek for my purse as for the bank-notes which you say are to stuff it—though I have no idea where they are to come from. But I shall think more of the purse than the notes, come when or how they may.

"To return, I really think *Fear* the most dramatic passion you have hitherto touched, because capable of being drawn to the most extreme paroxysm on the stage. In Orra you have all gradations, from a timidity excited by a strong and irritable imagination, to the extremity which altogether unhinges the understanding. The most dreadful fright I ever had in my life (being neither constitutionally timid, nor in the way of being exposed to real danger), was in returning from Hampstead the day which I spent so pleasantly with you. Although the evening was nearly closed, I foolishly chose to take the short cut through the fields, and in that

* This story is told, among others, by Montaigne.

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enclosure, where the path leads close by a thick and high hedge — with several gaps in it, however — did I meet one of your very thorough-paced London ruffians, at least judging from the squalid and jail-bird appearance and blackguard expression of countenance. Like the man that met the devil, I had nothing to say to him, if he had nothing to say to me, but I could not help looking back to watch the movements of such a suspicious figure, and to my great uneasiness saw him creep through the hedge on my left hand. I instantly went to the first gap to watch his motions, and saw him stooping, as I thought, either to lift a bundle or to speak to some person who seemed lying in the ditch. Immediately after, he came cowering back up the opposite side of the hedge, as returning towards me under cover of it. I saw no weapons he had, except a stick, but as I moved on to gain the stile which was to let me into the free field — with the idea of a wretch springing upon me from the cover at every step I took — I assure you I would not wish the worst enemy I ever had to undergo such a feeling as I had for about five minutes; my fancy made him of that description which usually combines murder with plunder, and though I was well armed with a stout stick and a very formidable knife, which when opened becomes a sort of *skene-dhu*, or dagger, I confess my

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sensations, though those of a man much resolved not to die like a sheep, were vilely short of heroism; so much so, that when I jumped over the stile, a sliver of the wood run a third of an inch between my nail and flesh, without my feeling the pain, or being sensible such a thing had happened. However, I saw my man no more, and it is astonishing how my spirits rose when I got into the open field;—and when I reached the top of the little mount, and all the bells in London (for aught I know) began to jingle at once, I thought I had never heard anything so delightful in my life—so rapid are the alternations of our feelings. This foolish story,—for perhaps I had no rational ground for the horrible feeling which possessed my mind for a little while, came irresistibly to my pen when writing to you on the subject of terror.

"Poor Grahame, gentle, and amiable, and enthusiastic, deserves all you can say of him; his was really a hallowed harp, as he was himself an Israelite without guile. How often have I teazed him, but never out of his good-humour, by praising Dundee and laughing at the Covenanters!—but I beg your pardon; you are a Westland Whig too, and will perhaps make less allowance for a descendant of the persecutors. I think his works should be collected and published for the benefit of his family. Surely

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the wife and orphans of such a man have a claim on the generosity of the public.*

" Pray make my remembrance to the lady who so kindly remembers our early intimacy. I do perfectly remember being an exceedingly spoiled, chattering monkey, whom indifferent health and the cares of a kind Grandmamma and Aunt, had made, I suspect, extremely abominable to everybody who had not a great deal of sympathy and good-nature, which I dare say was the case of my *quondam* bedfellow, since she recollects me so favourably. Farewell, and believe me faithfully and respectfully, your sincere friend, WALTER SCOTT."

Miss Baillie. in her next letter, mentioned the name of the " old bedfellow," and that immediately refreshed Scott's recollection. " I do," he replies, " remember *Miss Wright* perfectly well. Oh, how I should like to talk over with her our voyage in

* James Grahame, author of The Sabbath, had been originally a member of the Scotch Bar, and was an early friend of Scott's. Not succeeding in the law, he — (with all his love for the Covenanters) — took orders in the Church of England, obtained a curacy in the county of Durham, and died there, on the 14th of September 1811, in the 47th year of his age. See a Memoir of his Life and Writings in the Edinburgh Annual Register for 1812, part ii. pp. 384–415.

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the good ship the Duchess of Buccleuch, Captain Beatson, master; much of which, from the novelty doubtless of the scene, is strongly impressed on my memory. A long voyage it was—of twelve days, if I mistake not, with the variety of a day or two in Yarmouth Roads. I believe the passengers had a good deal of fun with me; for I remember being persuaded to shoot one of them with an air-gun, who, to my great terror, lay obstinately dead on the deck, and would not revive till I fell a-crying, which proved the remedy specific upon the occasion."

The mention of Mr Terry, in the letter about Orra, reminds me to observe that Scott's intimacy with that gentleman began to make very rapid progress from the date of the first purchase of Abbotsford. He spent several weeks of that autumn at Ashestiel, riding over daily to the new farm, and assisting his friend with advice, which his acquirements as an architect and draughtsman rendered exceedingly valuable, as to the future arrangements about both house and grounds. Early in 1812 Terry proceeded to London, and made, on the 20th May, a very successful *debut* on the boards of the Haymarket as Lord Ogleby. He continued, however, to visit Scotland almost every season, and no ally had more to do either with the plans ultimately adopted as to Scott's new structure, or with the

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collection of literary and antiquarian curiosities which now constitute its museum. From this time the series of letters between them is an ample one. The intelligent zeal with which the actor laboured to promote the gratification of the poet's tastes and fancies on the one side: on the other, Scott's warm anxiety for Terry's professional success, the sagacity and hopefulness with which he counsels and cheers him throughout, and the good-natured confidence with which he details his own projects—both the greatest and the smallest,—all this seems to me to make up a very interesting picture. To none of his later correspondents, with the one exception of Mr Morritt, does Scott write with a more perfect easy-heartedness than to Terry; and the quaint dramatic turns and allusions with which these letters abound, will remind all who knew him of the instinctive courtesy with which he uniformly adopted, in conversation, a strain the most likely to fall in with the habits of any companion. It has been mentioned that his acquaintance with Terry sprung from Terry's familiarity with the Ballantynes; as it ripened, he had, in fact, learned to consider the ingenious comedian as another brother of that race; and Terry, transplanted to the south, was used and trusted by him, and continued to serve and communicate with him, very much as if one of themselves had

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found it convenient to establish his headquarters in London.

Among the letters written immediately after Scott had completed his bargain with Dr Douglas, is one which (unlike the rest) I found in his own repositories: —

"*For Doctor Leyden, Calcutta.*

"*Favoured by the Hon. Lady Hood.*

"Ashestiel, 25th August 1811.

"My Dear Leyden,

"You hardly deserve I should write to you, for I have written you two long letters since I saw Mr Purves, and received from him your valued dagger,* which I preserve carefully till Buonaparte shall come or send for it. I might take a cruel revenge on you for your silence, by declining Lady Hood's request to make you acquainted with her; in which case, I assure you, great would be your loss. She is quite a congenial spirit; an ardent Scotswoman, and devotedly attached to those sketches of traditionary history which all the waters of the Burrampooter cannot, I suspect, altogether wash out

* A Malay crease, now at Abbotsford.

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of your honour's memory. This, however, is the least of her praises. She is generous, and feeling, and intelligent, and has contrived to keep her heart and social affections broad awake amidst the chilling and benumbing atmosphere of London fashion. I ought perhaps first to have told you, that Lady H. *was* the honourable Mary Mackenzie, daughter of Lord Seaforth, and is the wife of Sir Samuel Hood, one of our most distinguished naval heroes, who goes out to take the command in your seas. Lastly, she is a very intimate friend of Mrs Scott's and myself, and first gained my heart by her admiration of the Scenes of Infancy. So you see, my good friend, what your laziness would have cost you, if, listening rather to the dictates of revenge than generosity, I had withheld my pen from the inkhorn. But, to confess the truth, I fear two such minds would soon have found each other out, like good dancers in a ball-room, without the assistance of a master of ceremonies. So I may even play Sir Clement Cotterel with a good grace, since I cannot further my vengeance by withholding my good offices. My last went by favour of John Pringle,* who carried you a copy of the Lady of the Lake, a poem which I really think you will like better than Marmion on the

* A son of Mr Pringle of Whythank.

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whole, though not perhaps in particular passages. Pray let me know if it carried you back to the land of mist and mountain?

"Lady Hood's departure being sudden, and your deserts not extraordinary (speaking as a correspondent), I have not time to write you much news. The best domestic intelligence is, that the Sheriff of Selkirkshire, his lease of Ashestiel being out, has purchased about 100 acres, extending along the banks of the Tweed just above the confluence of the Gala, and about three miles from Melrose. There, saith fame, he designs to bigg himself a bower—*sibi et amicis*—and happy will he be when India shall return you to a social meal at his cottage. The place looks at present very like 'poor Scotland's gear.' It consists of a bank and haugh as poor and bare as Sir John Falstaff's regiment; though I fear, ere you come to see, the verdant screen I am about to spread over its nakedness will have in some degree removed this reproach. But it has a wild solitary air, and commands a splendid reach of the Tweed; and, to sum all in the words of Touchstone, 'it is a poor thing, but mine own.'*

"Our little folks, whom you left infants, are now

* "An ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own," &c.
As You Like It, Act V. Scene 4.

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shooting fast forward to youth, and show some blood, as far as aptitude to learning is concerned. Charlotte and I are wearing on as easily as this fashious world will permit. The outside of my head is waxing grizzled, but I cannot find that this snow has cooled either my brain or my heart.—Adieu, dear Leyden!—Pray, brighten the chain of friendship by a letter when occasion serves; and believe me ever yours, most affectionately,

WALTER SCOTT."

On the 28th of August 1811, just three days after this letter was penned, John Leyden died. On the very day when Scott was writing it, he, having accompanied the Governor-General, Lord Minto, on the expedition against Java, dashed into the surf, that he might be the first Briton in the armament who should set foot on the island. "When," says Scott, in his Sketch of Leyden's Life, "the well-concerted movements of the invaders had given them possession of the town of Batavia, he displayed the same ill-omened precipitation in his haste to examine a library, or rather warehouse of books, in which many Indian MSS. of value were said to be deposited. The apartment had not been regularly ventilated, and either from this circumstance, or already affected by the fatal sickness peculiar to Batavia, Leyden,

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when he left the place, had a fit of shivering, and declared the atmosphere was enough to give any mortal a fever. The presage was too just. He took to his bed and died in three days, on the eve of the battle which gave Java to the British empire—

'Grata quies patriæ, sed et omnis terra sepulchrum.'"*

The packet in which Lady Hood, on her arrival in India, announced this event, and returned Scott's unopened letter, contained also a very touching one from the late Sir John Malcolm, who, although he had never at that time seen the poet, assumed, as a brother borderer lamenting a common friend, the language of old acquaintanceship; and to this Scott replied in the same style which, from their first meeting in the autumn of the next year, became that, on both sides, of warm and respectful attachment. I might almost speak in the like tenor of a third letter in the same melancholy packet, from another enthusiastic admirer of Leyden; Mr Henry Ellis,† who also communicated to Scott his spirited stanzas on that untimely fate; but his personal intercourse

* This little biography of Leyden is included in Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works, vol. iv. p. 137.

† Now the Right Honourable Henry Ellis, appointed, in 1836, ambassador from the Court of St. James's to the Shah of Persia.

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with this distinguished diplomatist took place at a later period.

Before passing from the autumn of 1811, I may mention, that the letter of James Hogg, from which I have quoted an expression of regret as to Ashestiel, was one of many from the Shepherd, bearing about this date, which Scott esteemed worthy of preservation. Strange as the fact may appear, Hogg, on the other hand, seems to have preserved none of the answers; but the half of the correspondence is quite sufficient to show how constantly and earnestly, in the midst of his own expanding toils and interests, Scott had continued to watch over the struggling fortunes of the wayward and imprudent Shepherd. His letters to the different members of the Buccleuch family at this time are full of the same subject. I shall insert one, addressed, on the 24th of August, to the Countess of Dalkeith, along with a presentation copy of Hogg's "Forest Minstrel." It appears to me a remarkable specimen of the simplest natural feelings on more subjects than one, couched in a dialect which, in any hands but the highest, is apt to become a cold one:—

"Ashiestiel, Aug. 24, 1811.

"Dear Lady Dalkeith,

"The Ettrick Bard, who compiled the enclosed

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collection, which I observe is inscribed to your Ladyship, has made it his request that I would transmit a copy for your acceptance. I fear your Ladyship will find but little amusement in it; for the poor fellow has just talent sufficient to spoil him for his own trade, without having enough to support him by literature. But I embrace the more readily an opportunity of intruding upon your Ladyship's leisure, that I might thank you for the very kind and affecting letter with which you honoured me some time ago. You do me justice in believing that I was deeply concerned at the irreparable loss you sustained in the dear and hopeful boy* to whom all the friends of the Buccleuch family looked forward with so much confidence. I can safely say, that since that inexpressible misfortune, I almost felt as if the presence of one, with whom the recollection of past happiness might in some degree be associated, must have awakened and added to your Ladyship's distress, from a feeling that scenes of which we were not to speak, were necessarily uppermost in the recollection of both. But your Ladyship knows better than I can teach, that, where all common topics of consolation would be inapplicable, Heaven provides for us the best and most effectual lenitive in the

* Lord Scott. See *ante*, vol. iii. p. 60.

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progress of time, and in the constant and unremitting discharge of the duties incumbent on the station in which we are placed. Those of your Ladyship are important, in proportion to the elevation of your rank, and the promising qualities of the young minds which I have with so much pleasure seen you forming and instructing—to be comforts, I trust, to yourself, and an honour to society. Poor Lady Rosslyn* is gone, with all the various talent and vivacity that rendered her society so delightful. I regret her loss the more, as she died without ever making up some unkindness she had towards me for these foolish politics. It is another example of the great truth, that life is too short for the indulgence of animosity. I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect, your Ladyship's obliged and very humble servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

The Countess, in acknowledgment of the dedication of the Forest Minstrel, sent Hogg, through Scott's hands, the donation of a hundred guineas—a sum which, to him, in those days, must have

* The Countess of Rosslyn, born Lady Harriet Bouverie, a very intimate friend of Lady Dalkeith, died 8th August 1810. She had, as has been mentioned before, written to Scott, resenting somewhat warmly his song at the Melville dinner. See *ante* vol. ii. p. 326.

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seemed a fortune; but which was only the pledge and harbinger of still more important benefits conferred soon after her Ladyship's husband became the head of his house.

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CHAPTER XXIV

The Poem of Rokeby begun — Correspondence with Mr. Morritt — Death of Henry Duke of Buccleuch — George Ellis — John Wilson — Apprentices of Edinburgh — Scott's "Nick-Nackatories" — Letter to Miss Baillie on the Publication of Childe Harold — Correspondence with Lord Byron.

1811–1812.

Of the £4000 which Scott paid for the original farm of Abbotsford, he borrowed one half from his eldest brother, Major John Scott; the other moiety was raised by the Ballantynes, and advanced on the security of the as yet unwritten, though long meditated, poem of Rokeby. He immediately, I believe by Terry's counsel, requested Mr Stark of Edinburgh, an architect of whose talents he always spoke warmly,

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to give him a design for an ornamental cottage in the style of the old English vicarage-house. But before this could be done, Mr Stark died; and Scott's letters will show how, in the sequel, his building plans, checked for a season by this occurrence, gradually expanded,—until twelve years afterwards the site was occupied not by a cottage but a castle.

His first notions are sketched as follows, in a letter addressed to Mr Morritt very shortly after the purchase:—"We stay at Ashestiel this season, but migrate the next to our new settlements. I have fixed only two points respecting my intended cottage —one is, that it shall be *in* my garden, or rather kailyard—the other, that the little drawing-room shall open into a little conservatory, in which conservatory there shall be a fountain. These are articles of taste which I have long since determined upon; but I hope before a stone of my paradise is begun, we shall meet and collogue upon it."

Three months later (December 20th, 1811), he opens the design of his new poem in another letter to the lord of Rokeby, whose household, it appears, had just been disturbed by the unexpected *accouchement* of a fair visitant. The allusion to the Quarterly Review, towards the close, refers to an humorous article on Sir John Sinclair's pamphlets about the Bullion Question—a joint production of Mr Ellis and Mr Canning.

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" *To J. B. S. Morritt, Esq.*

" My Dear Morritt,

" I received your kind letter a week or two ago. The little interlude of the bantling at Rokeby reminds me of a lady whose mother happened to produce her upon very short notice, between the hands of a game at whist, and who, from a joke of the celebrated David Hume, who was one of the players, lived long distinguished by the name of *The Parenthesis*. My wife had once nearly made a similar blunder in very awkward circumstances. We were invited to dine at Melville Castle (to which we were then near neighbours), with the Chief Baron* and his lady, its temporary inhabitants,— when behold, the Obadiah whom I despatched two hours before dinner from our cottage to summon the Dr Slop of Edinburgh, halting at Melville Lodge to rest his wearied horse, make apologies, and so forth, encountered the Melville Castle Obadiah sallying on the identical errand, for the identical man of skill, who, like an active knight-errant, relieved the two distressed dames within three hours of each other. A blessed duet they would have made if they

* The late Right Honourable Robert Dundas, Chief Baron of the Scotch Court of Exchequer.

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had put off their crying bout, as it is called, till they could do it in concert.

"And now, I have a grand project to tell you of. Nothing less than a fourth romance, in verse; the theme, during the English civil wars of Charles I., and the scene, your own domain of Rokeby. I want to build my cottage a little better than my limited finances will permit out of my ordinary income; and although it is very true that an author should not hazard his reputation, yet, as Bob Acres says, I really think Reputation should take some care of the gentleman in return. Now, I have all your scenery deeply imprinted in my memory, and moreover, be it known to you, I intend to refresh its traces this ensuing summer, and to go as far as the borders of Lancashire, and the caves of Yorkshire, and so perhaps on to Derbyshire. I have sketched a story which pleases me, and I am only anxious to keep my theme quiet, for its being piddled upon by some of your *Ready-to-catch* literati, as John Bunyan calls them, would be a serious misfortune to me. I am not without hope of seducing you to be my guide a little way on my tour. Is there not some book (sense or nonsense, I care not) on the beauties of Teesdale — I mean a descriptive work? If you can point it out or lend it me, you will do me a great favour, and no less if you can tell me any traditions of the period. By which party was Barnard Castle

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occupied? It strikes me that it should be held for the Parliament. Pray, help me in this, by truth, or fiction, or tradition, — I care not which, if it be picturesque. What the deuce is the name of that wild glen, where we had such a clamber on horseback up a stone staircase? — Cat's Cradle, or Cat's Castle, I think it was. I wish also to have the true edition of the traditionary tragedy of your old house at Mortham, and the ghost thereunto appertaining, and you will do me yeoman's service in compiling the relics of so valuable a legend. Item — Do you know anything of a striking ancient castle belonging, I think, to the Duke of Leeds, called Coningsburgh?* Grose notices it, but in a very flimsy manner. I once flew past it on the mail-coach, when its round tower and flying buttresses had a most romantic effect in the morning dawn.

"The Quarterly is beyond my praise, and as much beyond me as I was beyond that of my poor old nurse who died the other day. Sir John Sinclair has gotten the golden fleece at last. Dogberry would not desire a richer reward for having been written down an ass. £6000 a-year!† Good faith,

* See note, Ivanhoe, *Waverley Novels*, vol. xvii. pp. 335–339.

† Shortly after the appearance of the article alluded to, Sir John Sinclair was appointed cashier of Excise for Scotland. "It should be added," says his biographer, "that the emoluments of

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the whole reviews in Britain should rail at me, with my free consent, better cheap by at least a cypher. There is no chance, with all my engagements, to be at London this spring. My little boy Walter is ill with the measles, and I expect the rest to catch the disorder, which appears, thank God, very mild. Mrs Scott joins in kindest compliments to Mrs Morritt, — many merry Christmases to you — and believe me, truly yours, WALTER SCOTT."

I insert Mr Morritt's answer, both for the light which it throws on various particular passages in the poem as we have it, and because it shows that some of those features in the general plan, which were censured by the professional critics, had been early and strongly recommended to the poet's consideration by the person whom, on this occasion, he was most anxious to please.

"*To Walter Scott, Esq.*

"Rokeby, 28th December 1811.

"My Dear Scott,

"I begin at the top of my paper, because your request must be complied with, and I foresee that a

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the situation were greatly reduced at the death of Sir James Grant, his predecessor."

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letter on the antiquities of Teesdale will not be a short one. Your project delights me much, and I willingly contribute my mite to its completion. Yet, highly as I approve of the scene where you lay the events of your romance, I have, I think, some observations to make as to the period you have chosen for it. Of this, however, you will be a better judge after I have detailed my antiquarian researches.— Now, as to Barnard Castle, it was built in Henry I.'s time, by Barnard, son of Guy Baliol, who landed with the Conqueror. It remained with the Baliols till their attainder by Edward I. The tomb of Alan of Galloway was here in Leland's time; and he gives the inscription. Alan, if you remember, married Margaret of Huntingdon. David's daughter, and was father, by her, of Devorgild, who married John Baliol, and from whom her son, John Baliol, claimed the crown of Scotland. Edward I. granted the castle and liberties to Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick; it descended (with that title) to the Nevills, and by Ann Nevill to Richard Duke of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard III. It does not appear to whom Henry VII. or his son re-granted it, but it fell soon into the hands of the Nevills, Earls of Westmoreland, by whom it was forfeited in the Rising of the North. It was granted by James I. to the citizens of London, from whom Sir Henry Vane received it by purchase. It does not seem

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ever to have been used as a place of strength after the Rising of the North; and when the Vanes bought it of the citizens, it was probably in a dismantled state. It was, however, a possession of the Vanes before the Civil Wars, and, therefore, with a safe conscience you may swear it stood for the Parliament. The lady for whose ghost you enquire at Rokeby, has been so buried in uncertainty, you may make what you like of her. The most interesting fiction makes her the heiress of the Rokebys, murdered in the woods of the Greta by a greedy collateral who inherited the estate. She reached the house before she expired, and her blood was extant in my younger days at Mortham tower. Others say it was a Lady Rokeby, the wife of the owner, who was shot in the walks by robbers; but she certainly became a ghost, and, under the very poetic *nom de guerre* of Mortham Dobby, she appeared dressed as a fine lady, with a piece of white silk trailing behind her—without a head, indeed (though no tradition states how she lost so material a member), but with many of its advantages, for she had long hair on her shoulders—and eyes, nose, and mouth. in her breast. The parson once, by talking Latin to her, confined her under the bridge that crosses the Greta at my dairy, but the arch being destroyed by floods in 1771, became incapable of containing a ghost any longer, and she was seen after that time by

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some of the older parishioners. I often heard of her in my early youth, from a sibyl who lived in the park to the age of 105, but since her death I believe the history has become obsolete.

"The Rokebys were at all times loyal, at least from Henry IV. downward. They lived early at Mortham tower, which was, I believe, a better building than the tower of Rokeby, for here also was one where my house now stands. I fancy they got Mortham by marriage.* Colonel Rokeby, the last possessor of the old blood, was ruined in the Civil Wars by his loyalty and unthriftiness, and the estates were bought by the Robinsons, one of whom, the *long* Sir Thomas Robinson, so well-known and well-quizzed in the time of our grandfathers, after laying out most of the estate on this place, sold the place and the estate together to my father in 1769. Oliver Cromwell paid a visit to Barnard Castle in his way from Scotland, October 1648. He does not seem to have been in the castle, but lodged in the town, whence I conclude the castle was then uninhabitable. Now I would submit to you, whether, considering the course of events, it

* The heiress of Mortham married Rokeby in the reign of Edward II.; and his own castle at Rokeby having been destroyed by the Scotch after the battle of Bannockburn, he built one on his wife's estate—the same of which considerable remains still exist — on the northern bank of the Greta.

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would not be expedient to lay the time of your romance as early as the war of the Roses. For, 1*st*, As you seem to hint that there will be a ghost or two in it, like the King of Bohemia's giants, they will be 'more out of the way.' 2*d*, Barnard Castle, at the time I propose, belonged to Nevills and Plantagenets, of whom something advantageous (according to your cavalier views) may be brought forward; whereas, a short time before the Civil Wars of the Parliament, the Vanes became possessors, and still remain so; of whom, if any Tory bard should be able to say anything obliging, it will certainly be '*insigne, recens, adhuc indictum ore alio*,' and do honour to his powers of imagination. 3*d*, The knights of Rokeby itself were of high rank and fair domain at the earlier period, and were ruining themselves ignobly at the other. 4*th*, Civil war for civil war: the first had two poetical sides, and the last only one; for the roundheads, though I always thought them politically right, were sad materials for poetry; even Milton cannot make much of them. I think no time suits so well with a romance, of which the scene lies in this country, as the Wars of the two Roses—unless you sing the rising of the the North; and then you will abuse Queen Elizabeth, and be censured as an abettor of Popery. How you would be involved in political controversy—with all our Whigs, who are anti-Stuarts;

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and all our Tories, who are anti-Papistical! I therefore see no alternative but boldly to venture back to the days of the holy King Harry; for, God knows, it is difficult to say anything civil of us since that period. Consider only, did not Cromwell himself pray that the Lord would deliver him from Sir Harry Vane? and what will you do with him?—still more, if you take into the account the improvements in and about the castle to which yourself was witness when we visited it together?*

"There is a book of a few pages, describing the rides through and about Teesdale; I have it not, but if I can get it I will send it. It is very bare of information, but gives names. If you can get the third volume of Hutchinson's History of Durham, it would give you some useful bits of information, though very ill written. The glen where we clambered up to Cat-castle is itself called Deepdale. I fear we have few traditions that have survived the change of farms, and property of all sorts, which has long taken place in this neighbourhood. But we have some poetical names remaining, of which we none of us know the antiquity, or at least the origin.

* Mr Morritt alludes to the mutilation of a curious vaulted roof of extreme antiquity, in the great tower of Barnard Castle, occasioned by its conversion into a manufactory of patent shot; —an *improvement* at which the Poet had expressed some indignation.

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Thus, in the scamper we took from Deepdale and Cat-castle, we rode next, if you remember to Cotherstone, an ancient village of the Fitzhughs on the Tees, whence I showed you a rock rising over the crown of the wood, still called Pendragon Castle. The river that joins the Tees at Cotherstone is yclept the Balder, I fancy in honour of the son of Odin; for the farm contiguous to it retains the name of Woden's Croft. The parish in which it stands is Romaldkirk, the church of St Romald the hermit, and was once a hermitage itself in Teesdale forest. The parish next to Rokeby, on the Tees below my house, is Wycliff, where the old reformer was born, and the day-star of the Reformation first rose on England.

"The family of Rokeby, who were the proprietors of this place, were valiant and knightly. They seem to have had good possessions at the Conquest (see Doomsday Book); in Henry III.'s reign they were Sheriffs of Yorkshire. In Edward II.'s reign, Froissart informs us, that when the Scotch army decamped in the night so ingeniously from Weardale that nobody knew the direction of their march, a hue and cry was raised after them, and a reward of a hundred merks annual value in land was offered by the Crown for whoever could discover them, and that de Rokeby —I think Sir Ralph—was the fortunate knight who ascertained their quarters on the moors near Hexham

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In the time of Henry IV., the High-Sheriff of Yorkshire, who overthrew Northumberland and drove him to Scotland after the battle at Shrewsbury, was also a Rokeby. Tradition says that this sheriff was before this an adherent of the Percys, and was the identical knight who dissuaded Hotspur from the enterprise, on whose letter the angry warrior comments so freely in Shakspeare. They are indeed, I think, mentioned as adherents of the Percys in Chevy Chase, and fought under their banner; I hope, therefore, that they broke that connexion from pure patriotism, and not for filthy lucre.

"Such are all the annals that occur to me at present. If you will come here, we can summon a synod of the oldest women in the country, and you shall cross-examine them as much as you please. There are many romantic spots, and old names rather than remains of peels, and towers, once called castles, which belonged to Scroops, Fitzhughs, and Nevills, with which you should be intimate before you finish your poem, — and also the abbots and monks of Egglestone, who were old and venerable people, if you carry your story back into Romish times; and you will allow that the beauty of the situation deserves it, if you recollect the view from and near the bridge between me and Barnard Castle. Coningsburgh Castle, a noble building as you say, stands between Doncaster and Rotherham. I think it be-

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longs to Lord Fitzwilliam, but am not sure. You may easily find the account of it in Grose, or any of the other antiquarians. The building is a noble circular tower, buttressed all round, and with walls of immoderate thickness. It is of a very early era. but I do not know its date.

"I have almost filled my letter with antiquarianism; but will not conclude without repeating how much your intention has charmed us. The scenery of our rivers deserves to become classic ground, and I hope the scheme will induce you to visit and revisit it often. I will contrive to ride with you to Wenslydale and the Caves at least, and the border of Lancashire, &c. if I can; and to facilitate that trip, I hope you will bring Mrs Scott here, that our dames may not be impatient of our absence. 'I know each dale, and every alley green,' between Rokeby and the Lakes and Caves, and have no scruple in recommending my own guidance, under which you will be far more likely to make discoveries than by yourself; for the people have many of them no knowledge of their own country. Should I, in consequence of your celebrity, be obliged to leave Rokeby from the influx of cockney romancers, artists, illustrators, and sentimental tourists, I shall retreat to Ashestiel, or to your new cottage, and thus visit on you the sins of your writings. At all events, however, I shall raise the rent of my inn at

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Greta-Bridge on the first notice of your book, as I hear the people at Callander have made a fortune by you. Pray give our kindest and best regards to Mrs Scott, and believe me ever, Dear Scott, yours very truly, J. B. S. MORRITT."

In January 1812, Scott entered upon the enjoyment of his proper salary as a clerk of Session, which, with his sheriffdom, gave him from this time till very near the close of his life, a professional income of £1600 a-year. On the 11th of the same month he lost his kind friend and first patron, Henry, third Duke of Buccleuch, and fifth of Queensberry. Both these events are mentioned in the following letter to Joanna Baillie, who, among other things, had told Scott that the materials for his purse were now on her table, and expressed her anxiety to know who was the author of some beautiful lines on the recent death of their friend, James Grahame, the poet of the Sabbath. These verses had, it appears, found their way anonymously into the newspapers.

To Miss Joanna Baillie, Hampstead.

"January 17th, 1812.

"My Dear Friend,

"The promise of the purse has flattered my

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imagination so very agreeably, that I cannot help sending you an ancient silver mouth-piece, to which, if it pleases your taste, you may adapt your intended labours: this, besides, is a genteel way of tying you down to your promise; and to bribe you still farther, I assure you it shall not be put to the purpose of holding bank-notes or vulgar bullion, but reserved as a place of deposit for some of my pretty little medals and nicknackatories. When I do make another poetical effort, I shall certainly expect the sum you mention from the booksellers, for they have had too good bargains of me hitherto, and I fear I shall want a great deal of money to make my cottage exactly what I should like it. Meanwhile, between ourselves, my income has been very much increased since I wrote to you, in a different way. My predecessor in the office of Clerk of Session retired to make room for me, on the amiable condition of retaining all the emoluments during his life, which, from my wish to retire from the Bar and secure a certain though distant income, I was induced to consent to; and considering his advanced age and uncertain health, the bargain was really not a bad one. But alas! like Sinbad's old man of the sea, my coadjutor's strength increased prodigiously after he had fairly settled himself on my shoulders, so that after five years' gratuitous labour I began to tire of my burden. Fortunately, Mr Bankes' late superan-

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nuation act provides a rateable pension for office-holders obliged to retire after long and faithful services; and my old friend very handsomely consented to be transferred from my galled shoulders to the broad back of the public, although he is likely to sustain a considerable diminution of income by the exchange, to which he has declared himself willing to submit as a penalty for having lived longer than he or I expected. To me it will make a difference of £1300 a-year, no trifle to us who have no wish to increase our expense in a single particular, and who could support it on our former income without inconvenience. This I tell you in confidence, because I know you will be very well pleased with any good fortune which comes in my way. — Everybody who cares a farthing for poetry is delighted with your volume, and well they may. You will neither be shocked nor surprised at hearing that Mr Jeffrey has announced himself of a contrary opinion. So, at least, I understand, for our very ideas of what is poetry differ so widely, that we rarely talk upon these subjects. There is something in his mode of reasoning that leads me greatly to doubt whether, notwithstanding the vivacity of his imagination, he really has any *feeling* of poetical genius, or whether he has worn it all off by perpetually sharpening his wit on the grindstone of criticism.

"I am very glad that you met my dear friend.

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George Ellis,—a wonderful man, who, through the life of a statesman and politician, conversing with princes, wits, fine ladies, and fine gentlemen, and acquainted with all the intrigues and tracasseries of the cabinets and *ruelles* of foreign courts, has yet retained all warm and kindly feelings which render a man amiable in society, and the darling of his friends.

"The author of the elegy upon poor Grahame, is John Wilson, a young man of very considerable poetical powers. He is now engaged in a poem called the *Isle of Palms*, something in the style of Southey. He is an eccentric genius, and has fixed himself upon the banks of Windermere, but occasionally resides in Edinburgh, where he now is. Perhaps you have seen him;—his father was a wealthy Paisley manufacturer—his mother a sister of Robert Sym. He seems an excellent, warm-hearted, and enthusiastic young man; something too much, perhaps, of the latter quality, places him among the list of originals.

"Our streets in Edinburgh are become as insecure as your houses in Wapping. Only think of a formal association among nearly fifty apprentices, aged from twelve to twenty, to scour the streets and knock down and rob all whom they found in their way. This they executed on the last night of the year with such spirit, that two men have died, and several

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others are dangerously ill, from the wanton treatment they received. The watchword of these young heroes when they met with resistance was—*Mar him*, a word of dire import; and which, as they were all armed with bludgeons loaded with lead, and were very savage, they certainly used in the sense of Ratcliffe Highway. The worst of all this is not so much the immediate evil, which a severe example* will probably check for the present, as that the formation and existence of such an association, holding regular meetings and keeping regular minutes, argues a woful negligence in the masters of these boys, the tradesmen and citizens of Edinburgh, of that wholesome domestic discipline which they ought, in justice to God and to man, to exercise over the youth intrusted to their charge; a negligence which cannot fail to be productive of every sort of vice, crime, and folly, among boys of that age.

"Yesterday I had the melancholy task of attending the funeral of the good old Duke of Buccleuch. It was, by his own direction, very private; but scarce a dry eye among the assistants—a rare tribute to a person whose high rank and large possessions re-

* Three of these lads, all under eighteen years of age, were executed on the scene of one of the murders here alluded to, April the 22d, 1812. Their youth and penitence excited the deepest compassion; but never certainly was a severe example more necessary

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moved him so far out of the social sphere of private friendship. But the Duke's mind was moulded upon the kindliest and most single-hearted model, and arrested the affections of all who had any connexion with him. He is truly a great loss to Scotland, and will be long missed and lamented, though the successor to his rank is heir also to his generous spirit and affections. He was my kind friend. Ever yours,

W. SCOTT."

The next of his letters to Joanna Baillie is curious, as giving his first impressions on reading Childe Harold. It contains also a striking sketch of the feelings he throughout life expressed, as to what he had observed of society in London—with a not less characteristic display of some of his own minor amusements.

"*To Miss Joanna Baillie.*

"Ashestiel, April 4th, 1812.

"I ought not, even in modern gratitude, which may be moved by the gift of a purse, much less in minstrel sympathy, which values it more as your work than if it were stuffed with guineas, to have delayed thanking you, my kind friend, for such an elegant and acceptable token of your regard. My kindest and best thanks also attend the young lady

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who would not permit the purse to travel untenanted.* I shall be truly glad when I can offer them in person, but of that there is no speedy prospect. I don't believe I shall see London this great while again, which I do not very much regret, were it not that it postpones the pleasure of seeing you and about half-a-dozen other friends. Without having any of the cant of loving retirement, and solitude, and rural pleasures, and so forth, I really have no great pleasure in the general society of London; I have never been there long enough to attempt anything like living in my own way, and the immense length of the streets separates the objects you are interested in so widely from each other, that three parts of your time are past in endeavouring to dispose of the fourth to some advantage. At Edinburgh, although in general society we are absolute mimics of London, and imitate them equally in late hours, and in the strange precipitation with which we hurry from one place to another, in search of the society which we never sit still to enjoy, yet still people may manage their own parties and motions their own way. But all this is limited to my own particular circumstances, —for in a city like London, the constant resident has beyond all other places the power of conducting himself exactly as he likes. Whether this is entirely

* The purse contained an old coin from Joanna Baillie's niece, the daughter of the Doctor.

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to be wished or not, may indeed be doubted. I have seldom felt myself so fastidious about books as in the midst of a large library, where one is naturally tempted to imitate the egregious epicure who condescended to take only one bite out of the sunny side of a peach. I suspect something of scarcity is necessary to make you devour the intellectual ban quet with a good relish and digestion, as we know to be the case with respect to corporeal sustenance. But to quit all this egotism, which is as little as possible to the purpose, you must be informed that Erskine has enshrined your letter among his household papers of the most precious kind. Among your thousand admirers you have not a warmer or more kindly heart; he tells me Jeffrey talks very favourably of this volume. I should be glad, for his own sake, that he took some opportunity to retrace the paths of his criticism; but after pledging himself so deeply as he has done, I doubt much his giving way even unto conviction. As to my own share, I am labouring sure enough, but I have not yet got on the right path where I can satisfy myself I shall go on with courage, for diffidence does not easily beset me—and the public, still more than the ladies, 'stoop to the forward and the bold'; but then in either case, I fancy, the suitor for favour must be buoyed up by some sense of deserving it, whether real or supposed. The celebrated apology of Dryden for a passage

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which he could not defend, 'that he knew when he wrote it, it was bad enough to succeed,' was, with all deference to his memory, certainly invented to justify the fact after it was committed.

"Have you seen the Pilgrimage of Childe Harold, by Lord Byron? It is, I think, a very clever poem, but gives no good symptom of the writer's heart or morals; his hero, notwithstanding the affected antiquity of the style in some parts, is a modern man of fashion and fortune, worn out and satiated with the pursuits of dissipation, and although there is a caution against it in the preface, you cannot for your soul avoid concluding that the author as he gives an account of his own travels, is also doing so in his own character. Now really this is too bad; vice ought to be a little more modest, and it must require impudence at least equal to the noble Lord's other powers, to claim sympathy gravely for the ennui arising from his being tired of his wassailers and his paramours. There is a monstrous deal of conceit in it too, for it is informing the inferior part of the world that their little old-fashioned scruples of limitation are not worthy of his regard, while his fortune and possessions are such as have put all sorts of gratifications too much in his power to afford him any pleasure. Yet with all this conceit and assurance, there is much poetical merit in the book, and I wish you would read it.

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"I *have* got Rob Roy's gun, a long Spanish-barrelled piece, with his initials, R. M. C., for Robert Macgregor Campbell, which latter name he assumed in compliment to the Argyle family, who afforded him a good deal of private support, because he was a thorn in the side of their old rival house of Montrose. I have, moreover, a relic of a more heroic character; it is a sword which was given to the great Marquis of Montrose by Charles I., and appears to have belonged to his father, our gentle King Jamie. It had been preserved for a long time at Gartmore, but the present proprietor was selling his library, or great part of it, and John Ballantyne, the purchaser, wishing to oblige me, would not conclude a bargain, which the gentleman's necessity made him anxious about, till he flung the sword into the scale; it is, independent of its other merits, a most beautiful blade. I think a dialogue between this same sword and Rob Roy's gun might be composed with good effect.

"We are here in a most extraordinary pickle—considering that we have just entered upon April, when according to the poet, 'primroses paint the sweet plain,'* instead of which, both hill and valley are doing penance in a sheet of snow of very respectable depth. Mail-coaches have been stopt—shepherds,

* Allan Ramsay's song of "The Yellow-hair'd Laddie."

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I grieve to say, lost in the snow; in short, we experience all the hardships of a January storm at this late period of the spring; the snow has been near a fortnight, and if it departs with dry weather, we may do well enough, but if wet weather should ensue, the wheat crop through Scotland will be totally lost. — My thoughts are anxiously turned to the Peninsula, though I think the Spaniards have but one choice, and that is to choose Lord Wellington dictator; I have no doubt he could put things right yet. As for domestic politics, I really give them very little consideration. Your friends, the Whigs, are angry enough, I suppose, with the Prince Regent, but those who were most apt to flatter his follies, have little reason to complain of the usage they have met with —and he may probably think that those who were true to the father in his hour of calamity, may have the best title to the confidence of the son. The excellent private character of the old King gave him great advantages as the head of a free government. I fear the Prince will long experience the inconveniences of not having attended to his own.—Mrs Siddons, as fame reports, has taken another engagement at Covent Garden: surely she is wrong; she should have no twilight, but set in the full possession of her powers.*

* Mrs Siddons made her farewell appearance at Covent Garden, as Lady Macbeth, on the 29th of June 1812: but she af-

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"I hope Campbell's plan of lectures will answer.* I think the brogue may be got over, if he will not trouble himself by attempting to correct it, but read with fire and feeling; he is an animated reciter, but I never heard him read.

"I have a great mind, before sealing this long scrawl, to send you a list of the contents of the purse as they at present stand:—

"1*st*, Miss Elizabeth Baillie's purse-penny, called by the learned a denarius of the Empress Faustina.

"2*d*, A gold brooch, found in a bog in Ireland, which, for aught I know, fastened the mantle of an Irish Princess in the days of Cuthullin, or Neal of the Nine Hostages.

"3*d*, A toadstone—a celebrated amulet, which was never lent to any one unless upon a bond for a thousand merks for its being safely restored. It was sovereign for protecting new-born children and their mothers from the power of the fairies, and has been repeatedly borrowed from my mother, on account of this virtue.

"4*th*, A coin of Edward I., found in Dryburgh Abbey.

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terwards resumed her profession for short intervals more than once, and did not finally bid adieu to the stage until the 9th of June 1819.

* Mr Thomas Campbell had announced his first course of Lectures on English Poetry about this time.

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"*8th* A funeral ring, with Dean Swift's hair.

"So you see my nicknackatory is well supplied, though the purse is more valuable than all its contents.

"Adieu, my dear friend. Mrs Scott joins in kind respects to your sister, the Doctor, and Mrs Baillie.

WALTER SCOTT."

A month later, the Edinburgh Review on Lord Byron's Romaunt having just appeared, Scott says to Mr Morritt (May 12)—"I agree very much in what you say of Childe Harold. Though there is something provoking and insulting to morality and to feeling in his misanthropical ennui, it gives, nevertheless, an odd piquancy to his descriptions and reflections. This is upon the whole a piece of most extraordinary power, and may rank its author with our first poets. I see the Edinburgh Review has hauled its wind."

Lord Byron was, I need not say, the prime object of interest this season in the fashionable world of London; nor did the Prince Regent owe the subsequent hostilities of the noble Poet to any neglect on his part of the brilliant genius which had just been fully revealed in the Childe Harold. Mr Murray, the publisher of the Romaunt, on hearing, on the 29th of June, Lord Byron's account of his introduction to his Royal Highness, conceived that,

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by communicating it to Scott, he might afford the opportunity of such a personal explanation between his two poetical friends, as should obliterate on both sides whatever painful feelings had survived the offensive allusions to Marmion in the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers; and this good-natured step had the desired consequences. Mr Moore says that the correspondence "begun in some enquiries which Mr Scott addressed to Lord Byron on the subject of his interview with Royalty;"* but he would not have used that expression, had he seen the following letter:—

"*To the Right Honourable Lord Byron, &c. &c.*
Care of John Murray, Esq., Fleet Street, London.

"Edinburgh, July 3d, 1812.

"My Lord,

"I am uncertain if I ought to profit by the apology which is afforded me, by a very obliging communication from our acquaintance, John Murray of Fleet Street, to give your Lordship the present trouble. But my intrusion concerns a large debt of gratitude due to your Lordship, and a much less important one of explanation, which I think I owe to myself, as I dislike standing low in the opinion

* Life and Works of Lord Byron, vol. ii. p. 155.

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of any person whose talents rank so highly in my own, as your Lordship's most deservedly do.

"The first *count*, as our technical language expresses it, relates to the high pleasure I have received from the Pilgrimage of Childe Harold, and from its precursors; the former, with all its classical associations, some of which are lost on so poor a scholar as I am, possesses the additional charm of vivid and animated description, mingled with original sentiment; — but besides this debt, which I owe your Lordship in common with the rest of the reading public, I have to acknowledge my particular thanks for your having distinguished by praise, in the work which your Lordship rather dedicated in general to satire, some of my own literary attempts. And this leads me to put your Lordship right in the circumstances respecting the sale of Marmion, which had reached you in a distorted and misrepresented form, and which, perhaps, I have some reason to complain, were given to the public without more particular enquiry. The poem, my Lord, was *not* written upon contract for a sum of money — though it is too true that it was sold and published in a very unfinished state (which I have since regretted), to enable me to extricate myself from some engagements which fell suddenly upon me, by the unexpected misfortunes of a very near relation. So that, to quote statute and precedent, I really come under the case cited by

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Juvenal, though not quite in the extremity of the classic author —

Esurit, intactam Paridi nisi vendit Agaven.

And so much for a mistake, into which your Lordship might easily fall, especially as I generally find it the easiest way of stopping sentimental compliments on the beauty, &c. of certain poetry, and the delights which the author must have taken in the composition, by assigning the readiest reason that will cut the discourse short, upon a subject where one must appear either conceited, or affectedly rude and cynical.

" As for my attachment to literature, I sacrificed for the pleasure of pursuing it very fair chances of opulence and professional honours, at a time of life when I fully knew their value; and I am not ashamed to say, that in deriving advantages in compensation from the partial favour of the public, I have added some comforts and elegancies to a bare independence. I am sure your Lordship's good sense will easily put this unimportant egotism to the right account, for — though I do not know the motive would make me enter into controversy with a fair or an *unfair* literary critic — I may be well excused for a wish to clear my personal character from any tinge of mercenary or sordid feeling in the eyes of a contemporary of genius. Your Lordship will likewise permit

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me to add, that you would have escaped the trouble of this explanation, had I not understood that the satire alluded to had been suppressed, not to be reprinted. For in removing a prejudice on your Lordship's own mind, I had no intention of making any appeal by or through you to the public, since my own habits of life have rendered my defence as to avarice or rapacity rather too easy.

"Leaving this foolish matter where it lies, I have to request your Lordship's acceptance of my best thanks for the flattering communication which you took the trouble to make Mr Murray on my behalf, and which could not fail to give me the gratification which I am sure you intended. I dare say our worthy bibliopolist overcoloured his report of your Lordship's conversation with the Prince Regent, but I owe my thanks to him nevertheless, for the excuse he has given me for intruding these pages on your Lordship. Wishing you health, spirit, and perseverance, to continue your pilgrimage through the interesting countries which you have still to pass with Childe Harold, I have the honour to be, my Lord, your Lordship's obedient servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

"P. S.—Will your Lordship permit me a verbal criticism on Childe Harold, were it only to show I have read his Pilgrimage with attention? 'Nuestra

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Dama de la Pena' means, I suspect, not our Lady of Crime or Punishment, but our Lady of the Cliff. the difference is, I believe, merely in the accentuation of 'peña.'"

Lord Byron's answer was in these terms:—

"*To Walter Scott, Esq., Edinburgh.*

"St James's Street, July 6, 1812.

"Sir,

"I have just been honoured with your letter.—I feel sorry that you should have thought it worth while to notice the evil works of my nonage, as the thing is suppressed *voluntarily*, and your explanation is too kind not to give me pain. The Satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit, and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions. I cannot sufficiently thank you for your praise; and now, waiving myself, let me talk to you of the Prince Regent. He ordered me to be presented to him at a ball: and after some sayings, peculiarly pleasing from royal lips, as to my own attempts, he talked to me of you and your immortalities; he preferred you to every bard past and present, and asked which of your works pleased me most. It was a difficult question. I answered, I

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thought the Lay. He said his own opinion was nearly similar. In speaking of the others, I told him that I thought you more particularly the poet of *Princes*, as *they* never appeared more fascinating than in Marmion and the Lady of the Lake. He was pleased to coincide, and to dwell on the description of your Jameses as no less royal than poetical. He spoke alternately of Homer and yourself, and seemed well acquainted with both; so that (with the exception of the Turks* and your humble servant) you were in very good company. I defy Murray to have exaggerated his Royal Highness's opinion of your powers, nor can I pretend to enumerate all he said on the subject; but it may give you pleasure to hear that it was conveyed in language which would only suffer by my attempting to transcribe it; and with a tone and taste which gave me a very high idea of his abilities and accomplishments, which I had hitherto considered as confined to *manners*, certainly superior to those of any living *gentleman*.

"This interview was accidental. I never went to the levee; for having seen the courts of Mussulman and Catholic sovereigns, my curiosity was sufficiently allayed: and my politics being as perverse as my rhymes, I had, in fact, no business there. To

* A Turkish ambassador and his suite figured at the ball.

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be thus praised by your Sovereign must be gratifying to you; and if that gratification is not alloyed by the communication being made through me, the bearer of it will consider himself very fortunately, and sincerely, your obliged and obedient servant,

BYRON."

"P. S.—Excuse this scrawl, scratched in a great hurry, and just after a journey."

Scott immediately replied as follows:—

"*To the Right Hon. Lord Byron, &c. &c. &c.*

"Abbotsford near Melrose, 16th July 1812.

"My Lord,

"I am much indebted to your Lordship for your kind and friendly letter: and much gratified by the Prince Regent's good opinion of my literary attempts. I know so little of courts or princes, that any success I may have had in hitting off the Stuarts is, I am afraid, owing to a little old Jacobite leaven which I sucked in with the numerous traditionary tales that amused my infancy. It is a fortunate thing for the Prince himself that he has a literary turn, since nothing can so effectually relieve the ennui of state, and the anxieties of power.

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"I hope your Lordship intends to give us more of Childe Harold. I was delighted that my friend Jeffrey—for such, in despite of many a feud, literary and political, I always esteem him—has made so handsomely the *amende honorable* for not having discovered in the bud the merits of the flower; and I am happy to understand that the retractation so handsomely made was received with equal liberality These circumstances may perhaps some day lead you to revisit Scotland, which has a maternal claim upon you, and I need not say what pleasure I should have in returning my personal thanks for the honour you have done me. I am labouring here to contradict an old proverb, and make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, namely, to convert a bare *haugh* and *brae*, of about 100 acres, into a comfortable farm. Now although I am living in a gardener's hut, and although the adjacent ruins of Melrose have little to tempt one who has seen those of Athens, yet, should you take a tour which is so fashionable at this season, I should be very happy to have an opportunity of introducing you to anything remarkable in my fatherland. My neighbour, Lord Somerville, would, I am sure, readily supply the accommodations which I want, unless you prefer a couch in a closet, which is the utmost hospitality I have at present to offer. The fair, or shall I say the sage, Apreece that was, Lady Davy that is, is soon to show us how much

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science she leads captive in Sir Humphrey; so your Lordship sees, as the citizen's wife says in the farce— 'Threadneedle Street has some charms,' since they procure us such celebrated visitants. As for me, I would rather cross-question your Lordship about the outside of Parnassus, than learn the nature of the contents of all the other mountains in the world. Pray, when under 'its cloudy canopy' did you hear anything of the celebrated Pegasus? Some say he has been brought off with other curiosities to Britain, and now covers at Tattersal's. I would fain have a cross from him out of my little moss-trooper's Galloway, and I think your Lordship can tell me how to set about it, as I recognise his true paces in the high-mettled description of Ali Pacha's military court.

"A wise man said — or, if not, I, who am no wise man, now say — that there is no surer mark of regard than when your correspondent ventures to write nonsense to you. Having, therefore, like Dogberry, bestowed all my tediousness upon your Lordship, you are to conclude that I have given you a convincing proof that I am very much your Lordship's obliged and very faithful servant,

WALTER SCOTT."

From this time the epistolary intercourse between Scott and Byron continued to be kept up; and it

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erelong assumed a tone of friendly confidence equally honourable to both these great competitors, without rivalry, for the favour of the literary world.

The date of the letter last quoted immediately preceded that of Scott's second meeting with another of the most illustrious of his contemporaries. He had met Davy at Mr Wordsworth's when in the first flush of his celebrity in 1804, and been, as one of his letters states, much delighted with "the simple and unaffected style of his bearing — the most agreeable characteristic of high genius." Sir Humphrey, now at the summit of his fame, had come by his marriage with Scott's accomplished relation, into possession of an ample fortune; and he and his bride were among the first of the poet's visitants in the original cabin at Abbotsford.

The following letter is an answer to one in which Mr Southey had besought Scott's good offices in behalf of an application which he thought of making to be appointed Historiographer-Royal, in the room of Mr Dutens, just dead. It will be seen that both poets regarded with much alarm the symptoms of popular discontent which appeared in various districts, particularly among the *Luddites*, as they were called, of Yorkshire, during the uncertain condition of public affairs consequent on the assassination of the Prime Minister, Mr Percival, by Bellingham, in the lobby of the House of Commons, on the 11th of

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May 1812; and that Scott had, in his capacity of Sheriff, had his own share in suppressing the tumults of the only manufacturing town of Selkirkshire. The last sentence of the letter alludes to a hint dropped in the Edinburgh Review, that the author of the historical department of the Edinburgh Annual Register ought to be called to the bar of the House of Commons, in consequence of the bold language in which he had criticized the parliamentary hostility of the Whigs to the cause of Spain.

"*To Robert Southey, Esq., Keswick.*

"Edinburgh, 4th June 1812.

"My Dear Southey,

"It is scarcely necessary to say that the instant I had your letter I wrote to the only friend I have in power, Lord Melville (if indeed he be now in power), begging him for the sake of his own character, for the remembrance of his father who wished you sincerely well, and by every other objuration I could think of, to back your application. All I fear, if Administration remain, is the influence of the clergy, who have a strange disposition to job away among themselves the rewards of literature. But I fear they are all to pieces above stairs, and much owing to rashness and mismanagement; for if they

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could not go on without Canning and Wellesley, they certainly should from the beginning have invited them in as companions, and not mere retainers. On the whole, that cursed compound of madness and villany has contrived to do his country more mischief at one blow than all her sages and statesmen will be able to repair perhaps in our day. You are quite right in apprehending a *Jacquerie;* the country is mined below our feet. Last week, learning that a meeting was to be held among the weavers of the large manufacturing village of Gaiashiels, for the purpose of cutting a man's web from his loom, I apprehended the ringleaders and disconcerted the whole project; but in the course of my enquiries, imagine my surprise at discovering a bundle of letters and printed manifestoes, from which it appeared that the Manchester Weavers' Committee corresponds with every manufacturing town in the South and West of Scotland, and levies a subsidy of 2s. 6d. per man — (an immense sum) — for the ostensible purpose of petitioning Parliament for redress of grievances, but doubtless to sustain them in their revolutionary movements. An energetic administration, which had the confidence of the country, would soon check all this; but it is our misfortune to lose the pilot when the ship is on the breakers. But it is sickening to think of our situation.

" I can hardly think there could have been any

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serious intention of taking the hint of the Review, and yet *liberty* has so often been made the pretext of crushing its own best supporters, that I am always prepared to expect the most tyrannical proceedings from professed demagogues.

"I am uncertain whether the Chamberlain will be liable to removal—if not, I should hope you may be pretty sure of your object. Believe me ever yours faithfully, WALTER SCOTT.

"*4th June.*—What a different birthday from those I have seen! It is likely I shall go to Rokeby for a few days this summer; and if so, I will certainly diverge to spend a day at Keswick."

Mr Southey's application was unsuccessful—the office he wished for having been bestowed, as soon as it fell vacant, on a person certainly of vastly inferior literary pretensions—the late Rev. J. S. Clarke, D. D., private librarian to the Regent.

END OF VOL. III.

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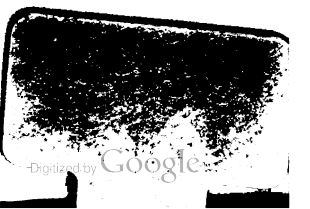
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